ABSTRACT

Discerning Expectations of Ministry: Priests and Laity in Dorking Deanery

by

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Across the Church of England, clergy provision is decreasing, parishes are amalgamating, and there is real fear that decline management is the main institutional effort. The concern is perhaps most keenly felt in rural contexts. The more sparse populations and often more scant resources of rural parishes make them frequent candidates for pastoral reorganizations. It is understandable to see this as a reduction of ministry in rural areas. These are realities that revitalization or church planting efforts in rural contexts must grapple with.

The purpose of this research was to discern the expectation of lay and priestly ministry in the rural areas of the Dorking Deanery in the Diocese of Guildford. This discernment was drawn from semi-structured interviews with a purposive typical case group of eleven. Four clergy, four congregational laity, and three community members were interviewed. The purposive typical case sample group was drawn from those who have some kind of experience or relationship with a parish church in the rural parishes of the Dorking Deanery, Guildford Diocese.

Four major findings were the result of the research. The first finding was the variety expectations of lay and priestly ministry across and within these parishes. Secondly, those expectations were variable. The variety of expectations were not static, and they are negotiable. This led on to the third finding. There was resilience related to the expectations held by the participants. Expectations could be negotiated or be more

flexible, and unmet expectations could be tolerated. The condition for this is the fourth and most significant finding. Presence is the most significant and least negotiable expectation. It is presence that navigates and negotiates all the other expectations. It is also applicable to both lay and priestly ministries.

Discerning the Expectation of Lay and Priestly Ministry in the Rural Parishes of the Dorking Deanery

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CHAPTER 1

NATURE OF THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter will introduce the research and researcher. It will offer an explanation of the situation at hand in the rural parishes of the Dorking Deanery. In doing so, it will introduce the present challenge and the questions that it raises. The purpose of the research will be identified as well as the key research questions that will help achieve that purpose. Following will be discussion about the project's rationale, instrumentation and methodology, as well as a brief literature review. These topics will be further elaborated on in chapters two and three.

Personal Introduction

"But we don't want a reduction of ministry!" The delivery was calm, but the concern was sincere. This Churchwarden was facing, for them, a troubling reality. Over the years, the vicar of their parish had become the rector of a Team Ministry consisting of their own and three other neighboring rural parishes. Priestly ministry became shared between the Team Rector and one other House for Duty Priest. Rather than a one priest for one parish arrangement, it had already become essentially 1.5 priests across four parishes. Now the sitting Team Rector had retired, and this Churchwarden was being told that the position was to become another House for Duty post – two part time House for Duty priests across four parishes. The Churchwarden made their concern known and felt.

As Area Dean of a deanery featuring a market town surrounded by rural parishes, I have observed that the concern expressed in this meeting is not unique. It and similar concerns are expressed in Deanery Chapter and Deanery Synod meetings. They are

expressed at pubs, on dog walks, and at school gates. Since beginning this research, two other rural parishes in the deanery are facing the near retirement of their full-time stipendiary vicar. Both parishes have proactively and strongly communicated that neither of them would be happy to receive a House for Duty priest next. Yet a fourth came to vacancy, failed to amalgamate with a neighboring parish, and is now being serviced by a part time non-stipendiary priest.

Across the Church of England the same story is being told, especially in rural areas. It is normal for pastoral reorganizations to amalgamate parishes into Groups, Teams, United Benefices, and United Parishes. In part, this is to create more efficient and equitable distribution of priests to populations. The goal is to more effectively and sustainably resource for mission and ministry. With every vacancy and each retirement, parish churches are being faced with that reality. Whichever way it is reorganized, what is perceived on the ground in rural contexts is that the ministry of the priest is being spread more and more thinly—ministry is reducing.

This thinning of ministry may not actually be any 'thinner' than is experienced in more densely populated urban parishes that may cover only a very small area of geography but hosts thousands or indeed tens of thousands more souls. This may be relevant information to senior clergy, secretaries, and boards of finance in a diocese. It is of less relevance to the village parishioner who has an experience and expectation of the church and her ministry in their rural village.

If the ministry of the church is indelibly connected to the parish priest and their ministry in a parish church building, then there is no other choice than to understand an amalgamation of parishes in rural contexts and/or the reduction of clerical provision from

full to part time as a reduction of ministry, even if such a reduction results in equity to other parishes in the diocese or is financially necessary. It is experienced as a withdrawal of the church from rurality. Like so many post-industrial tropes, it is also experienced as the urbanization of the church.

Though I am Area Dean of my deanery, I am principally the vicar of my own parish. In becoming the vicar in 2019, I also lead what some would refer to as a 'graft.' When I started in my new parish, I brought members with me from a sending parish where I had done my curacy to infuse the receiving parish with human and spiritual resource with which to reinvigorate its worshipping life, mission and ministry—a classic church planting model.

The sending and receiving parishes neighbor each other and even belong to the same 'group ministry,' belonging to the same 'mission action zone.' The sending parish is firmly in the market town. The receiving parish overlaps neighborhoods on the fringe of town and also rural geography such as farmland and forests. One of the principal apprehensions of the receiving parish was related to the feeling of being colonized by the sending parish in town and imposing foreign styles of worship, mission, and ministry on their perceived rural context, even though their partly rural parish contained bits of the town where also estates with relatively high levels of depravation and other urban features are found.

An urban germinated revitalization or re-evangelization strategy radiating from cross-cultural urban centers out to smaller cities to market towns and then to the countryside meets the same rural wall any other socio-political endeavor meets. While there are lessons to be learned from urban church planting and revitalization efforts, rural

church planting and revitalization requires its own approach germane to its own context. Yet further, it could become that as our rural parishes are revitalized, the worshipping life, mission and ministry in our urban centers will be nourished in the sort of missional reciprocity that we now appreciate is necessary for partnerships between ministries in developed and developing global contexts. This must be the way a whole nation would be re-evangelized, and a whole nation could be discipled.

Statement of the Problem

Several reports have been produced by the Church of England directly addressing the challenges for and opportunities in rural ministry: *Released for Mission: Growing the Rural Church, Shaping Strategies for Mission and Growth in Rural Multi-Church Groups, Learning from Creative Thinking and Planning for Rural Mission and Growth*, and *Enabling Mission and Growth in Rural Churches: a guide for PCC's and Congregations*. This last one is important as it specifically addresses the laity with reference to *Released for Mission*. Theological reflections such as the Church of England's *Calling All God's People* are useful in highlighting the need to encourage and release lay ministry. The *Anecdote to Evidence* findings also reveal that growing Churches feature the involvement of the laity in ministry.

Each of these reports draws attention to the need for different ways of imagining and realizing priestly and lay ministry if the church is to grow, particularly in rural areas. However, the degree to which this is known and accepted or applied by the clergy and laity in rural contexts is uncertain. If the expectation of lay and priestly ministry in a given context is not consistent with the findings reflected in reports such as these, it is difficult to see how revitalization strategies such as Church Planting, Fresh Expressions,

Missional Communities, and/or other efforts can be expected to be fruitful. Either the expectations of lay and priestly ministry need to be addressed or different revitalization methods need to be considered for these rural areas.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this research was to discern the expectation of lay and priestly ministry in the rural parishes of the Dorking Deanery in the Diocese of Guildford through semi-structured appreciative interviews with clergy, congregational laity, and community members in these parishes.

Research Questions

In order to discern expectations around lay and priestly ministry, one must be clear about what 'ministry' is. How one understands "ministry" or "the ministry of the church" is fundamental to how one would then understand what is or must be priestly and what does not have to be. Research question 1 seeks to discern that with clarity. In one way of offering a sensitizing typology there are, generally, three sorts of people within a parish. There is the parish priest with her or his expectation. There is also a congregation of laity, however small or big, with their varied expectations. Lastly, there is a parish community who also have a set of expectations. Question two seeks to elicit those perspectives and expectations. Expectations are sometimes fixed and other times flexible. Question three will be informative about the fixed or unfixed nature of these expectations.

Research Question #1

What does "ministry" or "ministry of the Church" mean to the clergy, congregational laity, and community members of these rural parishes?

Research Question #2

Among the clergy, congregational laity, and community members of these rural parishes, what expectations of the ministry of the Church are placed upon priests and the laity?

Research Question #3

Among the clergy, congregational laity, and community members of these rural parishes, how flexible are those expectations?

Rationale for the Project

This research must be done for biblical, theological and practical reasons. Orthodoxy and orthopraxy must go hand in hand. Knowing what the Bible has to say on the matter is imperative. However, many of the twenty first century questions about ministry, priesthood, and laity are not necessarily answered from the scriptures in a straightforward manner. Theological consideration is required, not only from a twenty first century theological position, but a position of belief in the communion of saints. The theological voice of the whole Church deserves to be heard. Since belief impacts action, a robust theological sense of priestly and lay ministry is imperative. Lastly, the practical implications are massive. This research is not necessary simply for the preservation of some parish churches in some rural areas. This research is about the practical discipleship and ministry of God's people for the redemption and restoration of his creation (Wright 46).

Asking questions regarding lay and priestly ministry is an inherently ecclesiological activity. It concerns an understanding of what the church is and what the church is doing in the world. It gets even more theological. In order to have a notion of

what the church is and what the church is doing in the world, one needs an idea of who or what God is and what God is doing in the world (Wright 23–32). These theological, ecclesiological, and missiological questions are deep, wide ranging, and beyond the scope of this particular work. Nevertheless, a certain range of ways of answering these questions will be represented in the following chapters. The literature review will have some representation of how these ideas are understood, and the interviews will reveal some of the understanding of these topics held by the participants.

This research will shed light on the ways in which people in the rural parishes of the Dorking Deanery understand these topics, even if unable to identify them with the vocabulary of theology, ecclesiology, and missiology. Understanding expectations of lay and priestly ministry will reveal who or what people believe a priest or layperson to be and do. It will therefore reveal what they believe the church is as well as its' purpose in the world. As such it can better inform an intervention in these contexts whereby church planting, parish revitalization, and any other effort to enhance the mission and ministry of the church in these rural areas may be potentially more fruitful.

Definition of Key Terms

Rural Parish:

For the purposes of this research, a rural parish is any ecclesiastical parish in the Church of England located in a Local Authority District assigned by the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs as Mainly or Largely Rural, or a rural feature within Urban with Significant Rural classification (Bibby and Brindley 6). This ministry project and research is taking place in the Dorking Deanery of the Diocese of Guildford in the county of Surrey. It exists within the Mole Valley Local Authority, which is

classified by the UK Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs as "Urban with Significant Rural" (Bibby and Brindley 9) and Dorking as its "Hub Town" (Bibby and Brindley 14). While the Mole Valley District is neither predominantly rural nor predominately urban (*The 2011 Rural-Urban Classification for Local Authority Districts in England*), the Dorking Deanery mostly consists of sparsely populated ecclesiastical parishes with proximity to the hub town of Dorking.

Church:

This research and ministry project took place in the Church of England; therefore, basic Anglican concepts and constructs form the ecclesiological frame. However, even within Church of England Anglicanism, lexical and/or grammatical ambiguity can often confuse the conversation and there are several ecclesiological influences at play which will be discussed later.

Article XIX of the Thirty Nine Articles of Religion reads: "THE visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful [people], 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'). More recently, Fresh Expressions of church have entered the ecclesiological discourse and missional practice. "Fresh Expressions" is defined as: "Different ways of doing or being a church. This might be where they meet or how they worship designed to engage people who don't normally go to church" ('Glossary'). This definition reveals a sense of 'church' as a particular bit of architecture where official Christian worship, mission and ministry is conducted as well as being a group of people who 'are' something. 'Church' could also be used very broadly with reference to entire global denominations or communions, such

as 'the Church of England,' or 'the Roman Catholic Church.' This research project uses 'church' in all of the above respects.

Parish:

The Church of England regards the parish as "The smallest pastoral area within the Church of England. [It] usually has one main church building" ('Glossary'). It is an organizational feature of the Church of England and a defined piece of geography of varying size and population with legally defined borders within which certain responsibilities, activities, and various organizational expressions reside. Under various pastoral schemes, parishes have diverse and legally set relationships with other surrounding parishes.

Priest:

The Church of England describes a priest as, "An ordained person who preaches, celebrates the sacraments and provides pastoral care" ('Glossary'). As an English word, this research understands 'priest' as derivative of 'presbyter,' the transliteration from the Greek word πρεσβύτερος. It is one of the three ordained offices of bishop, priest, and deacon in the Church of England

Laity:

For the purposes of this research, the 'laity' are those in the church who have not been ordained as deacon, priest or bishop. It is derived from the Greek word, λαός, which gives refence to the larger body of God's people. A lay person may hold an office within the church as described in Section E of the Canons of the Church of England. The laity are certainly not excluded from participation in the ministry of the church, rather they are integral to it ('Section E').

Ministry:

The Church of England defines 'ministry' as "A general term for the work of the church in worship, mission and pastoral care" ('Glossary'). This definition is the definition being used for this research and usefully reveals certain points. The inclusion of mission is critical and is importantly broad. The Church of England identifies five "marks" of mission. Succinctly, they can be understood as evangelism, discipleship, pastoral care, social engagement, and creation care (*The Five Marks of Mission*). This is significantly important to the following discussion related to lay and priestly ministry.

Delimitations

This research has been undertaken within the ten Anglican rural parishes of the Dorking Deanery in the Church of England's Guildford Diocese, at the time of the research. All but one of these parishes are amalgamated with at least one other parish. Clergy, congregational laity, and community members were engaged in semi-structured appreciative interviews. Ten participants were selected to form a purposive typical case sample group. Four were ordained priests in the Church of England. Four were congregational laity, and three were selected from the community. Additionally, diversity among interviewees particularly with respect to gender and age was prioritized where available.

The ten parishes of the Dorking Deanery outside of the main hub town of Dorking within which research took place were:

- St. Barnabas, Ranmore
- St. John the Evangelist, Wotton
- St. James, Abinger
- St. Mary, Holmbury
- Christ Church, Coldharbour
- St. Mary Magdalene, the Holmwood

- St. Peter's, Newdigate
- St. John the Baptist, Capel
- St. Margaret's, Ockley
- Holy Trinity, Westcott (not amalgamated)

More will be discussed on their relative rurality in chapter three.

Review of Relevant Literature

In preparation for this research, literature related to biblical, historical and theological backgrounds were reviewed. Also, various Church of England reports were consulted related to church growth, mission and ministry in multi-church groups, and rural mission and ministry. Lastly, literature related to clergy burn out and ministry expectations were also reviewed.

For biblical backgrounds, biblical texts in both English and original languages were reviewed or consulted. Old Testament texts were examined from Christian, Jewish, and academic translations, the Septuagint and commentaries. Additionally other theological works related to relevant scriptural texts or themes were consulted. New Testament texts were examined from Christian and academic translations. Both the *Nestle-Aland 28th Edition* and the *United Bible Society 4th Edition* New Testament Greek texts were consulted. Commentaries, journal articles, and other literature related to New Testament texts were drawn from the breadth of Church of England traditions and other Protestant and/or Roman Catholic sources.

Historical background content was drawn from both primary sources and the work of credible historians such a Kenneth Hylson-Smith, Joseph Lynch and Diarmaid MacCulloch. Primary sources were drawn from the Apostolic Fathers through the English Reformation and Church of England historical formularies. These and other primary sources also served to support theological backgrounds for discussion about lay and

priestly ministry in the Church of England. In addition to theological primary sources, other more contemporary works related to the priesthood and laity were reviewed. Many of these authors were or are bishops or archbishops in the Church of England. Some are other non-conformist theologians or missiologists. Also, Roman Catholic theologians were consulted, particularly those associated to Vatican II like Yves Congar, Edward Schillebeeckx, and Hans Kung.

Other literature related to rural contexts and ministry were also reviewed. Various Church of England reports such as those mentioned previously were reviewed including *Faith in the Countryside, Renewing Faith in the Countryside,* and *From Anecdote to Evidence*. Other experts and titles related to rural ministry were consulted such as Andrew Bowden's *Ministry in the Countryside,* Hopkinson et al.'s *Re-Shaping Rural Ministry*, David Osbourne's *The Country Vicar*, and Anthony Russell's *The Country Parson*. Furthermore, experts on clergy burnout in rural English contexts were reviewed. Paul and Jenny Rolph's *Perceptions of Stress on Those in Rural Ministry,* as well as D. W. Turton's work on clergy burnout and emotional exhaustion are significant works. They highlight the role of ambiguity or clarity of expectation versus reality as pivotal for clergy well-being and flourishing ministry (Rolph and Rolph 54–60; Turton 36–39).

Research Methodology

The purpose of the research is to discern the expectations of lay and priestly ministry in the rural parishes of the Dorking Deanery. The research was conducted through semi-structured interviews with a purposive typical case sample group. The structured aspect of the interviews sought to establish the interviewees' understandings of things like the church, its ministry, and the work of the priesthood and the laity. From

those foundational understandings less structured questions around expectations of priestly and lay ministry were deployed.

The overall structure and design of the research was principally informed by Tim Sensing's *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* and Michael Patton's *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. The multi-method approach this research took "engage[d] in a critical dialogue that leads to several sets of rich data, resulting in the possibility for deeper understandings" (Sensing 54). The design and methodology of the research will illuminate the expectation of lay and priestly ministry in the rural parishes of the Dorking Deanery by observing and triangulating the thoughts and feelings of participants on the topic, their communication, and actual behaviors.

Type of Research

The research was a pre-intervention project with an aim to more fully understand a key aspect of my ministry context, whereby a more well-informed intervention related to church planting or some other revitalization tactic could be more successfully deployed.

Participants

The first type of participant was the priest with responsibility within the parishes concerned. These were full or part time, they were from an amalgamated context with responsibility for more than one parish. They included both male and female clergy. There was also some range in length of time in their post or ministry in their parish. The aim of this research is not so much to determine the source of expectations so much as to identify what those expectations are currently.

Congregational laity of these parishes were be included as interviewees. Effort was made toward the greatest possible diversity regarding age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomics and churchmanship. However, that may was not as achievable as would be interesting as most of the congregations of the parishes concerned are not very diverse. Rather, they are generally of a particular age, ethnicity and churchmanship.

Yet further, expectations within the community are particularly important, especially in a Church of England context. Community members have certain expectations on their parish church for pastoral services/occasional offices such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals. There are also cultural expectations rooted in centuries of church history in England. Those expectations can have determinative effects on the ministry of the parish church, particularly if that church is struggling and sees meeting community expectations as an important piece in stimulating growth. Therefore, sampling community members as participants is vital.

Instrumentation

In order to obtain more rich responses, I chose to apply Appreciative Inquiry principles to semi-structured qualitative interviews. More on Appreciative Inquiry will be discussed in chapter three. Qualitative interviews are aimed at accessing the thoughts, views, and values of the interviewee, hopefully without contaminating the interviewees views with that of the interviewer (Patton 278). However, according to the Appreciative Inquiry principle of simultaneity, this is hardly possible. The introduction of the question itself instigates change, introduces an idea, or offers a framework. Appreciative Inquiry puts forward that inquiry itself is an intervention. Though my research is a pre-

intervention project, the intervening nature of asking questions must be accounted for and directed constructively.(Whitney 55–57).

Data Collection

Qualitative data was collected from a purposive and typical case sampling. Interviews with the participants were conducted and recorded via Zoom in a semi-structured way, guided by some aspects of Appreciative Inquiry. The interview questions and checklist were aligned to the research questions. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data from the interviews was processed with cross-case/cross-interview inductive analysis. READ AI was used to transcribe and offer a summary with key points. Transcriptions were proofread and compared to the meeting recording. Summaries and key points were produced by READ AI were and compared against summaries and key points arrived at by the researcher. Answers and feedback from the interviews were grouped according to common questions or analyzed according to different perspectives on key themes. Indigenous concepts and typologies were identified. Also, sensitizing concepts and typologies were deployed as data was analyzed, from both interviews and observational data.

Generalizability

As will be seen in chapter three, the context of the Dorking Deanery of the Diocese of Guildford is a narrowly focused context. While it is a rural context, it has an unusually close proximity to major conurbation, is relatively wealthy, and does not feature the same level of agriculture and other rural features typical of rural contexts

elsewhere in England. In that way, this highly contextualized research has only indirect generalizability. Nevertheless, there are certain patterns across the Church of England related to the expectations of lay and priestly ministry based on centuries of practice embedded in culture. While some findings of the research and the interventions they may inform will be somewhat bespoke to the Dorking Deanery, there will likely be themes that are revealed that other Church of England contexts would resonate with.

Project Overview

This research is a pre-intervention project. It deployed a qualitative methodology using semi-structured appreciative inquiry interviews from a purposive typical case sample group to triangulate rich data sources. Such rich data was analyzed though cross-case/cross-interview inductive analysis. Such collection and analysis of data yielded answers to the research questions that illuminated the expectation of lay and priestly ministry in the rural parishes of the Dorking Deanery.

Chapter two will feature a literature review on the biblical, historical and theological backgrounds of notions of lay and priestly ministry. Chapter three will elaborate on the methodology of this research. Chapter four will demonstrate the evidence from which answers to the research questions were arrived at. Finally, chapter five will identify the major findings of the research and their implications, while lastly offering some recommendations for intervention.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter will review relevant literature pertaining to the biblical, theological, historical, and other contextual matters associated with the research. The review of biblical literature will focus on biblical notions of priesthood at key eras of covenantal initiation: Abraham, the Exodus and the early Church. Additional biblical literature from the New Testament related to the leadership of the local church will be surveyed. After these biblical foundations have been explored, theological literature related to priestly and lay ministry will be surveyed.

Historical and other contextual matters will be reviewed. Literature that helps trace the historical development principally of priestly and some lay ministry of the church from the Apostolic Fathers, through the Western tradition to the twenty-first century Church of England will be discussed with a particular view to a British/English context. Additionally, literature that illuminates the broader context of the rural parishes of the Church of England will be interacted with. Lastly, as the research is to do with expectations of lay and priestly ministry, throughout the review attention will be paid to the potential impact of these topics on such expectations.

Biblical Foundations

Priesthood at the Time of Abraham

One of the first formal encounters with a priest is found in Genesis 14. This occurs in an epochal season change. Specifically in this text, Abraham returns from battle and encounters the King of Sodom and the mysterious Melchizedek, King of Salem and

priest of God Most High (*El Elyon*). Melchizedek is described in Hebrews as having neither mother, father nor genealogy and mysteriously having "neither beginning of days nor end of life…" (Heb. 7:3). Nevertheless, Melchizedek is both a priest and a king, and his interactions with Abraham give some indication, however sparsely, about priestly identity and activity.

Most of Judeo-Christian understanding of Salem and *El Elyon* is that they are indeed to be understood with reference to what would become Jerusalem and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel). Notes in the JPS Tanakh assert that *God Most High* is a common reference for the God of Israel, and the authors cite Psalm 47:3 as another occurrence of it (Berlin et al. 34–35). While Psalm 47:3 actually gives reference to *Yahweh Elyon* rather than *El Elyon* (*JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh* 1468), *El* and *Yahweh* are typical biblical varieties of referring to the God of Israel (Sarna, *Genesis JPS Commentary* 110). Also, in Psalm 76:3, Salem is directly connected to Zion and the dwelling place of the God of Israel (Speiser 104). This understanding continues through the tradition and writings of the Genesis Apocryphon, Josephus, and the Targums (Sarna, *Genesis* 109–10). It is also the understanding of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* 626). Though some identify pagan Canaanite origins of Salem and *El Elyon* (Alter 47; Sarna, *Genesis* 110).

Here at the time of Abraham, some interesting observations are made related to priestliness or priestly activity. The first is that Melchizedek receives a tithe of the battle spoils from Abraham. Then Melchizedek blesses Abraham. It is the first positive action by someone identified as a priest in the whole of the Judeo-Christian scripture. Often sacerdotal ministries located at designated cult locations are what is expected of a priest.

However, this priest imbued with all of the anticipatory imagery of sacrificial worship at the temple in Jerusalem does none of this. Also interesting at the time of Abraham is the regularity with which people who are *not* identified as priests are offering sacrifices. Cain, Abel and Noah are all recorded as offerings or sacrifices to God. Abraham himself offers sacrifice to God on several occasions, as do Isaac and Jacob. None of these are identified as priests.

Priesthood at the Time of Exodus

Upon bringing Israel up from slavery in Egypt to the foot of Mount Sinai, God speaks to Moses in Exodus 19. It is another time of epochal covenantal development as God forges his covenant with Israel. In the opening verses, particularly vv. 5-6, God indicates a critical covenantal reality. The whole earth is his. This could be a reference to the entirety of terrestrial creation, or some have suggested it is a reference to all peoples of the world (Berlin et al. 146). Whichever way it is understood, through faithfulness to the covenant, Israel would be, among other things, a "kingdom of priests" before God within that world and among those peoples as a sovereign nation under a monarch (Sarna, *Exodus* 104). Perhaps the nation would serve a priestly function in the world, before God, or both, in some sort of national corporate way. Or, it could be understood as a nation composed of priests, each person having some sort of priestly status and performing some sort of priestly function before God and in the world. Perhaps both understandings are embedded in the phrase. Whatever the meaning of "kingdom of priests," the whole of Israel prepares for their purification and consecration to this divinely appointed role (Berlin et al. 146).

God then calls the Israelite tribe of Levi. Within this kingdom of priests, a priestly tribe is set aside. In the Torah, the Levites are called to guard the tabernacle/temple and tend to its transport. They also serve a sort of substitutionary/redemptive role within Israel, serving in place of the first-born children in all of Israel (Levenson 46; Num. 8.16-19). However, as a whole, they do not engage in the kind of priestly ministry one usually imagines a priest to engage in, namely, sacrificial worship. Rather, a particular family group within the Levites are called and commissioned to this ministry: Aaron and his sons. The remaining Levites, though regarded as the 'priestly tribe,' actually have little if anything at all to do specifically with sacrifices. Nevertheless, these Levite assistants have to go through a consecration process, setting them aside for their particular ministry, just as the whole of the nation experienced in its national vocation (Milgrom 16–24; Lev. 3-4, 8).

A spine standing all of creation before God is being erected here in the Torah. All of the world and all of its peoples belong to God. Out of the world, the people of Israel are set aside and consecrated to a priestly identity and role, tending to and being the place of mediation between God and his world. Out of Israel the tribe of Levi is set aside, tending to the mediation between God and his people that takes place in the tabernacle/temple. Out of the Levites, Aaron's line is set aside to tend to a specific mediative task of sacrificial worship, and out of that line a single High Priest emerges.

There does not appear to be a consistently direct link between priesthood and offering of sacrifices. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob offer sacrifices, yet are not priests. The priest, Melchizedek, is not described as offering sacrifices even if it might be presumed that he did. Most of the Levites do not offer sacrifices, though they are the priestly tribe.

Aaron and his sons are priests and offer sacrifice on behalf of the people. The whole of the people of Israel maintain a priestly identity, but the vast majority are unable to offer sacrifice. They must hand over their offerings to the priests of the Aaronic line.

Priesthood at the Beginning of the Church

It may appear strange to jump straight from Abraham to the Exodus to the beginnings of the Church. There are centuries of priestly practice and content from the whole of the Hebrew Bible to consider. However, for the purposes of this work, these three pivotal moments of covenant development have been chosen as critical reference points to reasonably limit an otherwise unwieldy scope of content. The Epistles to the Romans and the Hebrews, 1 Peter, and Revelation have the clearest commentary on priesthood as the new covenant era commences. The frames of reference which guide their discussion are the previously discussed considerations of Melchizedek, the Levites, the Aaronic priesthood, and the priestly identity of all of Israel.

1 Peter 2 will be considered here first where Peter identifies his audience in terms of Exodus 19. He refers to them as "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession" (1 Pet. 2:9). In so doing, Peter draws distinct parallels and establishes connectivity of identity and purpose between his audience and the then newly liberated ancient Israelites at Mt. Sinai. However, the phraseology between "a royal priesthood" in 1 Peter and "a kingdom of priests" in Exodus 19 is slightly different.

In comparing the Greek texts of 1 Peter 2:9 in both the Nestle-Aland 27th Edition and the UBS 4th Edition with the Bagster Septuagint text of Exodus 19:6, it is observed that the Greek phrase βασίλειον ἱεράτευμα ("royal priesthood") is used on all occasions. Perhaps that would suggest that Peter's draw on the Hebrew scriptures is not purely an

exercise in drawing upon Israel's beginnings where a subtle difference between "royal priesthood" and "kingdom of priests" might be identified (*The Septuagint, Greek and English* 95; Aland et al. 788; Burer et al. 601). Perhaps St. Peter is a drawing upon an understanding of Exodus 19:6 from the Septuagint which could be relatively more contemporary to him than germane to the original Hebrew text. However, the Prophets and Writings carry on the notion of a "royal priesthood" in passages such as Hosea 4.4-9, Micah 4.8, Psalm 114.2, Isaiah 61.6-10, and Zechariah 3 (Davies 159). The question of Exodus 19 still lingers in 1 Peter 2, that is whether the priestly identity is corporate, individual, or both.

Among various commentators, I. Howard Marshall is particularly concise and helpful. He indicates that "royal priesthood" in 1 Peter 2.9 "…means that the people constitute a group of priests belonging to a king" (*1 Peter* 74). This would also be consistent with Peter's salutation at the beginning of this epistle. He writes to God's elect and describes them as those who have been "sprinkled with [Jesus'] blood." This carries certain priestly overtones with it. Marshall finds its parallel in the consecration of the whole of the Israelite nation at Mt. Sinai in Exodus 24 (*1 Peter* 32). This sprinkling of blood for consecration then also features in the ordination of Aaron and his sons as individual priests in Leviticus 8:30. According to Marshall, both the corporate and individual priestly identity of God's people appears to be what Peter has in view.

In the inaugural generation of the New Covenant, an emphasis on God's people being a monarchical nation composed of priests with respect to Exodus 19:6 seems to be favored. Marshall goes further identifying the common association between priesthood and offering sacrifices to God on others' behalf. Having identified Jesus as the singular

one who has offered the final sacrifice, he strongly rejects any notion of a priestly caste or class within the Church in any sacerdotal way. He leans heavily on the understandable presumption that most people connect priesthood with offering sacrifice and that this confuses our ability to understand and appropriate priesthood to the whole of the church (*1 Peter* 75).

First Peter is not the only New Testament work to draw on Exodus 19.6 in describing the priestly identity of God's people into the New Covenant age. Whereas St. Peter refers to the church as "a royal priesthood" (βασίλειον ἱεράτευμα), St. John records the song of heaven in Revelation 5 describing those redeemed by Jesus' blood as "a kingdom and priests" (βασιλείαν καὶ ἱερεῖς) (Rev. 5.10). The plain sense of the text identifies people from every tribe, language, people and ethnicity to be two things substantively and simultaneously: a singular kingdom, and priests, plural. That plurality suggests one of two things. It could suggest that each people, language, tribe and ethnicity represented becomes "a kingdom of priests" just like Israel and is subject to the same interpretive questions as Israel in Exodus 19.6. It could also suggest that all members of the singular kingdom are themselves priests irrespective of their ethnic, political, or linguistic origins (Caird 76–77).

George Eldon Ladd also picks up on this priestly theme in Revelation. He notes that this mention in chapter 5 is not isolated. Rather it enfolds the whole of the Apocalypse. In the beginning of the book, the audience is identified as a kingdom and priests (βασιλείαν, ἱερεῖς) in echo of Exodus 19:6 and 1 Peter 2:9. This priestly (ἱερεῖς) identity of God's people is further reinforced towards the end of the book in 20.6. Ladd identifies the ministry of this priesthood as presence with God offering sacrifices of

praise, thanksgiving and worship rather than animals or some other form of mediation (Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* 27). From a Johannine perspective both a corporate and individual priestly identity is to be favored.

Similarly to Marshall's view, the sort of sacrificial worship that is often assumed in priestly ministry is likely not in view in the formative years of the church. J. P. M. Sweet associates the priestly ministry of any or every member of the church to that of St. Paul as described in Romans 15.16 (130). Here, Paul describes his priestly work (ιερουργοῦντα) in terms of sharing the gospel with the gentiles rather than anything cultic or sacerdotal, even if that is how the Greek word is used in Josephus and Philo (Cranfield 756). Barrett suggests that some sort of sacrificial ministry is in play. But the offering to God is not a blood or animal sacrifice. Rather, it is the living sacrifice of the gentiles being offered to God (Barrett, *Epistle to the Romans* 275). F. F. Bruce highlights that this text in Romans echoes of Hebrews 8.2. The following verses in Hebrews 8 describe priestly ministry as offering both gifts and sacrifices. Rather than having something sacrificial in mind (even if living), Bruce understands the offering of the gentiles as a gift to God rather than a sacrifice (260).

The Epistle to the Hebrews is a key New Testament text with rich content revealing an early Christian understanding of the priesthood. The author of Hebrews also clearly attaches their early Christian understanding of priesthood to the very beginning of God's covenant with Israel. They also appeal to the time of the covenantal season change at the time of Abraham. The author's priestly frames of reference are Melchizedek, the Aaronic/Levitical Priesthood, and worship in the Tabernacle. They use these frames of reference to understand the person and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Andrew Murray helpfully demonstrates this progression in his outline of the epistle. In the first half of his commentary, he describes how Jesus' priestly ministry and covenant transcends not only Aaron, but even Abraham, Moses and the Law. Jesus' sacrifice, indestructible life, and heavenly ministry in God's presence in the order of Melchizedek renders any previous understanding of covenant, sacrifice, or priesthood obsolete (Murray 235–42). Murray then calls the second half of his commentary "practical" (351). In other words, he is setting out to describe the rest of the epistle's contents as the practical outworking of a Christian who is in covenant relationship with God through the priestly ministry of Jesus.

The very first verses that Murray addresses at the beginning of this section are Hebrews 10.19-22. These verses begin with the instructions to draw near to God, to enter the Most Holy Place through the curtain that is Jesus' body. The invitation into God's presence as understood as behind the curtain in the tabernacle is clearly priestly (Murray 353–68). Murray puts forward that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews affirms a priestly ministry of every believer that is understood as entering into and dwelling in God's presence rather than anything sacerdotal. Sacerdotal matters have been resolved in Christ's High Priesthood, and each believer has a priestly ministry in approaching God's presence resultant from it.

Guthrie follows similarly. He identifies a shift in the epistle from theological content to practical content in Hebrews 10.19. From 10.19, Guthrie describes, "the writer sets out the privileges and responsibilities of the Christian life" (210). He carries on to describe the first privilege and responsibility of the Christian life as entering into the sanctuary, holy place, or presence of God. Guthrie then goes on to say that this holy place

"is no longer reserved for the priesthood" (Guthrie 211). Perhaps Guthrie is thinking specifically of the Aaronic priesthood, though he does not clarify this. Within the text of the epistle, it would appear that such a priestly thing as entering into God's presence is not so much unrestricted to those who are not priests so much as that priestly activity is now the province of those united with the High Priest who is Christ.

This priestly identity of each believer also seems to be inferred later in 10.19-22. The call to draw near to God with a sincere heart is occasioned by the believer having their hearts sprinkled and bodies washed by pure water. These occasions appear to be allusions to two Old Testament priestly rituals. One is the priestly ritual whereby a member of the Israelite community could be ceremonially cleansed by being sprinkled with water that had the ash of a sacrificial red heifer mixed into it (Num. 19). The second was the washing of the priests in Exodus 29 as they were consecrated for priestly ministry (Gordon 118). Latent in the text of the Epistle to the Hebrews is an understanding that each Christian through their union with the High Priest who is Christ, is cleansed of their uncleanness, consecrated for, and engages in a priestly ministry that is ordinary for the Christian and is understood in terms of entering God's presence.

The prevailing thrust of the Epistle to the Hebrews with respect to priesthood is the movement from Melchizedek, Aaron, and the Levites to Jesus of Nazareth. It is not a movement from these three to the church or a certain caste within it. An exegetical reading of the Epistle to the Hebrews leads one to a conclusion that sacerdotal worship and covenant mediation are singularly connected exclusively to Jesus of Nazareth (Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* 625–28). Other priestly activities, specifically approaching God's presence, are then opened to each and every believer by their union

with Christ. This supports an understanding of the royal priesthood of the entirety of God's people both collectively and individually due to their union with Christ (Atherstone 6–7; 45–46). Some take this lack of priestly class or caste withing the Church as far as to declare "The Priesthood of *No* Believer" as an emphasis on the priesthood of Christ and the Church as a *collective* entity in union with Christ (Greggs 376–77). Others such as the Eastern Orthodox scholar, Stelian Tofană, disagree and maintain that such a class or caste was present within the Apostle Paul's lifetime (210, 215-16).

Aside from those disputes, what has been seen from the Old and New Testament texts so far is that sacerdotal and priestly ministry are not necessarily synonymous. The Patriarchs are not priests but offer sacrifices. Melchizedek is a priest but does not appear to offer sacrifices; rather, he blesses. Most of the Levites do not offer sacrifices; rather, they exist for the defense and support of the tabernacle/temple. One family of the Levites, descended from Aaron do offer sacrifices as well as gifts (that often they also receive as Melchizedek did).

In the New Testament, Jesus is the priest who exclusively has offered, not sacrifices, but one blood sacrifice, once for all. The whole of the Body of Christ is united to that priestly identity, united to that act of sacrifice, has no residual material sacerdotal ministry beyond it, and retains a priestly character. That priestly character is understood in the service of sharing the gospel to the gentiles, offering the gentiles to God as a gift, as entering into God's presence, offering sacrifices of praise, thanksgiving and worship, being available to his service, and more besides. Yet further, there does not appear to be much strong evidence of a priestly class or caste with particular remit for these activities

within the body of the early church. Rather, it is all the normal reality of the ordinary believer.

ἐπίσκοπος, πρεσβύτερος, διάκονος

As demonstrated above, there does not appear to be a very strongly supported exegetical notion of a particular class or caste of "priests" or "priesthood" within the church in the New Testament. Rather, Jesus Christ himself and those united to him appear to occupy that priestly space. Nevertheless, there are specific offices and officers mentioned in the canonical texts from the Early Church.

There is some measure of potential conversation around the number and titles of these offices and officers. For instance, some may wish to include discussion from Ephesians 4.11 and consider the gift of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers as offices/officers in the Church. Such a conversation would indeed be fruitful and interesting, particularly given the nature of this research with respect to lay and ordained ministry. They will be returned to later. With respect to ordained ministry, the Church of England maintains the three orders of deacons, priests and bishops (Atherstone 45). For that reason, the discussion here will be limited to those offices and officers.

It is quite conspicuous that the threefold ordination of bishops, priests and deacons appears to correspond almost exactly to the offices of bishop/overseer (ἐπίσκοπος), priest/presbyter/elder (πρεσβύτερος), and deacon (διάκονος). The issue of deacons and diaconal ministry are beyond the scope of this research. Rather, ἐπίσκοπος and πρεσβύτερος are relevant. The lack of uniform English or ecclesiological vocabulary that has developed over millennia of Church history, evolution, tradition, and translation with respect to these terms, offices and officers has contributed to an ambiguity in

understanding them. As this research is concerned with priestly ministry, this section will be looking into content regarding ἐπίσκοπος and πρεσβύτερος in the New Testament in pursuit of some clarity.

Having just been addressing 1 Peter 2.9 above with respect to priesthood (βασίλειον ἱεράτευμα), the same chapter of Peter's first epistle mentions ἐπίσκοπος or its cognates only verses later (v. 12) and is related to the occasion of a visitation from God rather than a particular office or officer within the church. The usage of ἐπίσκοπος occurs at the end of the chapter. While the UBS 4th Edition Greek text largely maintains a prose throughout the chapter, the Nestle-Aland 27th Edition marks out the final verses of the chapter (2:21-25) as a sort of hymn. Here, Jesus is identified as the shepherd (ποιμένα) and ἐπίσκοπον of their souls. Here ἐπίσκοπον is variously translated as either overseer or guardian but has no reference to an office or officer in the church. Rather it is an identity of Christ in relationship to St. Peter's audience (Marshall, *1 Peter* 95–96).

Another cognate of ἐπίσκοπος is found in 1 Peter. In 5.1, St. Peter begins to address the elders (πρεσβυτέρους) among his audience and identifies himself as one of their number (συμπρεσβύτερος), even as an Apostle himself. Peter's charge to these πρεσβύτερος is to be shepherds (ποιμάνατε) of God's flock, watching over them (ἐπισκοποῦντες). Here the participial form of ἐπισκοπέω is found, though its inclusion in the original text is contested (Burer et al. 607). Such construction would seem to indicate that, at least in this instance, oversight is an activity of these elder/shepherds. This certainly echoes the pastoral and overseeing identity and activity of Jesus identified in chapter 2 (Marshall, *1 Peter* 162).

In the Pastoral Epistles of 1 Timothy and Titus, the Apostle Paul appears to identify πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος—elder and overseer, respectively—as offices/officers in the church. However, there appears to be some ambiguity over whether this is the same or different office/officer. In these epistles, the Apostle Paul instructs the recipients regarding all manner of matters concerning the organization and activities of "God's household [which] is the Church of the living God" (1 Tim. 3.15). Instructions are given regarding deacons, older men, widows, younger women and younger men. This section, however, will look specifically into these epistles with respect to overseers (ἐπίσκοποι) and elders (πρεσβύτεροι).

With respect to 1 Timothy, one first encounters επισκοπος in 3.1 with respect to an office within the church. In the following verses the Apostle Paul outlines for Timothy the qualifications for one who seeks to hold such an office and would become an overseer (ἐπίσκοπον). However, Paul does not elaborate on the activities of an overseer, seemingly taking a shared knowledge for granted. It is a commonly held view that such confidence is most likely rooted in the widely known structures of synagogue governance and the significant influence that the practices of first century Judaism had on the beginning practices of the first century Church (Bowes 50–52).

The same appears to be true with respect to πρεσβυτέροι (elders). Paul appears to be more interested in the qualities and qualifications of those who would be elders than he is interested in their function and appears to conflate πρεσβυτέρους and ἐπίσκοπον in Titus 1:5-7. As Titus is instructed to appoint elders (πρεσβυτέρους) in every town on the island of Crete, he is further instructed about the qualities of an overseer (ἐπίσκοπον). Elders who oversee are likely to be regarded as the older members of the

community as would be seen in Hellenistic Judaism. The title of overseer or elder would appear to be interchangeable (Towner 244–47).

Gordon Fee takes a similar tack. He asserts that the Pastorals are not so much a manual of ecclesiastical order, rather a description of the realities and concerns of the time and place of the Church then in the first century and there at Crete and Ephesus, at least. Fee also sees elders and overseers as practically interchangeable. However, he takes the view that it is likely that elder(s) is the broader group of leadership within which overseers and deacons belong, with whom rest the responsibility of preaching, teaching and caring for the Church (Fee 21–22). He goes further to assert that St. Paul's main concern is less about delineating their specific and distinct functions than contrasting them with false teachers (Fee 78–79).

Some disagree with Fee and Towner. While conceding that overseers and elders at least overlap in function, some see deacons as clearly subordinate (Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles* 13–14). Others see a clearer hierarchy within the pastorals. In this hierarchy, there is a bishop/overseer who is separate from and over a group of elders "readily translated into priests" followed by subordinate deacons (Houlden 16). Hendriksen is quick to contest this notion. He writes, "The hierarchical idea – the *several* 'priests' and their 'parishes,' outranked and governed by the *one* 'bishop' and his 'diocese' – is foreign to the Pastorals" (Hendriksen 346). What Hendriksen views as foreign to the Pastorals, Houlden simply sees as an ambiguity that an appeal to Ignatius of Antioch brings clarity to (Houlden 74–75).

Further to add to the discussion of overseers and elders in the Pastoral Epistles is the content in Acts related to Paul's interaction with the leaders of the Ephesian church.

There is significant interest in this occasion recorded in Acts 20. It is here that Stelian Tofană finds evidence of a priestly caste within the church (215–16). Also, it is in Ephesus where Timothy receives the so-called Pastoral Epistle of 1 Timothy containing instructions regarding overseers. Furthermore, Paul will later write the Ephesians and make mention of the gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor/shepherds, and teachers that have been mentioned previously and will be addressed again later.

In Acts 20.17, Paul calls for the elders (πρεσβυτέρους) of the church in Ephesus to meet him one last time before he expects he will be arrested in Jerusalem upon arriving there. After defending his ministry among them, he exhorts them to their duty—to keep watch as shepherds of the flock which is the church of God. In this exhortation Paul calls the group of elders (πρεσβυτέρους) 'overseers' (ἐπισκόπους) by the making of the Holy Spirit (Acts 20.28). At least these particular elders are also overseers whose oversight is paired with the notion of shepherding (ποιμαίνειν) like unto Jesus' designation as shepherd and guardian/overseer (ποιμένα and ἐπίσκοπον) in 1 Peter 2.25. This understanding would have been that which Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians and 1 Timothy would have been read and understood in as they were written after this occasion in Acts 20.

Interestingly, I. Howard Marshall, whose commentary on 1 Peter has been earlier cited, notices the similarities here in Acts 20.28 with 1 Peter 5.2. However, he does not appear to connect it with 1 Peter 2.25 (Marshall, *1 Peter* 95–96). Neither does Marshall identify these ἐπισκόπους as episcopal office holders. Rather, their shepherding oversight is simply a function that these πρεσβυτέρους perform. He also seems to prefer the substantival notion of "guardians" to "bishops" or "overseers" in this text (Marshall, *Acts*

333–34). C.K. Barrett views the different designations as representation of a sociological and a theological perspective on the same person or office. An elder is sociologically designated while and overseer has theological connotations to God's redeeming visitation (Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* 975).

In summary, across the Pastoral Epistles and Acts, there does not seem to be a clear line of distinction between elders (πρεσβύτεροι) and overseers (ἐπίσκοποι). Rather, it seems to be blurred at almost every instance. Yet further, though the Greek vocabulary for 'priest' (ἱερεύς) existed, it is not deployed in any of these texts. Any differentiation between elders (πρεσβύτεροι) and overseers (ἐπίσκοποι) appears to be a practical, sociological or theological construction. A further consideration to be addressed later is the association between the English word priest and the Greek word πρεσβύτερος rather than ἱερεύς. As Jaroslav Pelikan notes, there does not appear to be any kind of formal pattern or orders of ministers or ministry in the New Testament. Ideas of ordained offices/officers of bishop/overseer, elder/presbyter/priest, and deacon really do not emerge until the second and third centuries (Pelikan 218).

Ephesians 4.11-12 and Lay Ministry

Earlier, mention was made of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor/shepherds and teachers (the source of Alan Hirsch's 'APEST' acronym which will be frequently used). These were presented as potential offices or officers within the Church that are distinct from the three ordained offices/officers of bishops, priests and deacons. Also, it was noted how these gifts of Jesus to the church are described in a letter to the Ephesians from St. Paul who also wrote a Pastoral Epistle to an Ephesian context and, in Acts, addressed the Ephesian elders as overseers by the making of the Holy Spirit.

Some overlap in responsibility between these potential 'lay offices' and the orders of bishop, priest and deacon may exist. For example, one who is an apostle, evangelist or teacher may also find themselves holding one of the offices. However, perhaps there is also some distinction that is relevant to this particular research and the question around expectations of lay and priestly ministry. Hirsch writes:

> I am increasingly convinced of the need to thoroughly reframe the inherited understanding of ministry and leadership along the lines of those explicitly taught, as well as actively demonstrated, throughout the New Testament church – namely, the Ephesians 4 categorization of apostle, prophet, evangelist alongside the more accepted categories of pastor/shepherd and teacher. (189)

If this has any merit, then some treatment of these verses in Ephesians 4 is essential in research related to lay and ordained ministry in any context.

Much introductory matter regarding the Epistle to the Ephesians is beyond the scope of this research. There are many questions surrounding the authorship, date and recipients of the epistle (Best, *Commentary* 45). Buy how one dates Ephesians in relationship to the Pastoral Epistles is of interest. This is especially true as the APEST gifts are not mentioned in the Pastorals, and neither are overseers, elders, or deacons mentioned in Ephesians. Yet Ephesians and 1 Timothy are written to the same geographic context with, presumably, not too much time between them, relatively speaking. For the purposes of this work, Pauline authorship and traditional dating of the Epistle to the Ephesians and 1 Timothy will be accepted, while also noting the interest that neither bishops, overseers, priests, nor deacons are mentioned in Ephesians.

The organizational structure of the Church locally or more broadly is not a concern in Ephesians. This is perhaps a bit more conspicuous when one notices the *haustafeln* passages in chapters 5 and 6, offering structural order to Christian households. Rather, Paul appears to be more concerned with the church's unity, diversity, and edification than its organization. It is to this end that the APEST portfolio of gifts is introduced. So, in some way, looking for a leadership framework from the text may be an imposition upon it. These are gifts given for the building up of the body rather than an organizational chart of ecclesiastical hierarchy.

The general consensus is that the gifts given by Christ which are read about in Ephesians 4.11 are not spiritually derived abilities such as healing, serving, tongues, prophecy or others in lists found in texts like Romans 12 or 1 Corinthians 12. Rather, as Francis Foulkes writes concisely, "the gifts are the people" (qtd. in Best, *Commentary* 388). Ernest Best takes a similar and strong view. To him, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors/shepherds, and teachers are certainly not simply activities. Neither are they roles that are simply filled or certain people who are gifts to the body.

Rather, he insists that the APEST gifts are offices and officials in the church and are distinctly different from ordinary believers and would later develop in the distinction between the clergy and laity (Best, *Commentary* 375). Best concedes that certain functions emanate from these offices which insinuates that there may be APEST activities that 'ordinary believers' might engage in. Additionally, Best affirms that these offices are not mutually exclusive. He cites the Apostle Paul's self-identification to Timothy as both apostle and teacher (1 Tim. 2:7) as evidence (Best, *Commentary* 389).

This is also suggestive that these offices and the offices of overseer, elder and deacon ran, and perhaps run, concurrently in the Church.

Schnackenburg also sees these APEST gifts as people themselves who have been given for the edification of the Church rather than spiritual capacities such as healing or tongues. He also maintains that the functions of these people within the Church are already known to the reader and that there is some debate about the degree to which these gifts are offices in the Church. However, he acknowledges that at least at the time of the writing, Apostles and Prophets were officers in the Church at some level and that pastors, preachers and teachers were certainly leading in local congregations (Schnackenburg 180–82).

As with Foulkes, John Stott notices the lack of the threefold order of overseers/bishops, elders/presbyters/priests and deacons in Ephesians. He further confronts the notion that perhaps bishops, priests and deacons are institutional ministries compared to charismatic APEST ministries as a "false distinction and a disastrous one." He then leans in on the presbyterial qualification in the Pastoral Epistles of "being able to teach." Stott uses this to demonstrate that the ordained offices in the Church and the APEST gifts are not to be understood as mutually exclusive but overlapping. Stott goes so far as to suggest that each of the APEST gifts ultimately have something to do with teaching just like the ordained offices. This reinforces the notion that all the gifts and offices are necessary for the leading and building up of the church (Stott 164–66).

Ernest Best takes a slightly deeper dive on these APEST ministers. He interacts with Schnackenburg and takes a similar tack to Stott regarding a differentiation between the apostles and prophets and the remaining evangelist, shepherd/pastor, and teacher.

Both Stott and Best regard the primary force of apostles and prophets to be Apostles and Prophets in the uniquely authoritative and almost canonical sense. While acknowledging that there were and are people who have apostolic or prophetic giftings or ministries, the Apostles and Prophets here in Ephesians 4.11 are to be understood more formally, foundationally, and finally than that (Stott 160–62; Best, *Essays* 160–63). When considering the other three gifts, Best struggles how best to identify them, settling with calling them "offices." He further notes, "By its introduction of 'officials' Ephesians may be said to have hastened the division between clergy and laity, [and] begun the sacralization of the ministry" (Best, *Essays* 171–72).

One of Best's more interesting observations is related to the eucharist. Ephesians is almost universally understood to be concerned with the building up and unity of the church. Best identifies the eucharist as one of the more central means for this. However, it is not mentioned in Ephesians, just as overseers, elders and deacons are not either. Best makes the point that there does not seem to be much content in either Ephesians or the Early Church to know who was or was not able to officiate or preside at the eucharist. It could very well have been one of the APEST officers, the homeowner of the house the church met in, or anyone else for that matter (Best, *Essays* 170–71).

The fact that bishops/overseers, elders/presbyters/priests and deacons are not mentioned in Ephesians 4.11 causes one to take pause. In that pause, one must consider the potential for unity, edification, and mission for any church that relies on the officials of bishop, priest and deacon for it. Furthermore, it impacts the expectations of mission and ministry among those who are or are not ordained as bishop, priest or deacon. What is encountered here in the Epistle to the Ephesians is that there are gifts to the church,

which are not the traditionally ordained offices of overseer/bishop, elder/presbyter/priest, or deacon. These gifts may be understood as lay gifts, and they are imperative to the edification and missional life of the church.

Summary

This section has surveyed Biblical foundations with respect to priesthood, elders, and overseers and the so called APEST gifts. It has looked at priestly ministry at three key covenantal moments: Abraham, Israel at Sinai, and the Early Church. From Melchizedek it was learned that priesthood was associated with receiving the tithe and bestowing blessing. From Aaron and his sons, it was learned that priesthood concerned the offering of ritual sacrifice and offerings. From the broader tribe of Levi, it was noticed that priesthood and priestly ministry included safeguarding and tending to the apparatus of sacrifice and offering, even if not being directly involved in it. Finally, it was noticed that the whole of the people of Israel also possessed some sort of priestly function.

The section then turned to the New Testament and the beginnings of the Church. There it was noticed that there is not a caste or class of people within the Church that would be understood as 'priests' (ἱερεῖς). Rather whenever priest or priesthood is mentioned outside of the historic realities of the Jewish priests/priesthood, it is in reference to Jesus principally. Secondarily, following the type of paradigm mentioned above, it is attributed to the whole of the Church and each of its members rather than a specific office, officer, caste or class within it.

Interestingly, when it comes to offices or officers within the Church, 'priest' (ἱερεύς) fails to be mentioned in the biblical text in any way that would be recognized

with respect to the historical offices in the institutional Church. The three orders of bishop/overseer, elder/presbyter and deacon are readily recognized. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor/shepherds and teachers may also be, whether formally or informally. All are necessary for the building up, mission and ministry of the church. From this survey it is seen that each, and more yet still, should be understood as priestly.

Historical Developments

Having surveyed the biblical content, this section will address the historical developments of notions around priestly ministry, primarily. In this section, contents from the period of the Apostolic Fathers will be surveyed, followed by an examination of pre-Nicene shifts and the benchmark thinking of St. John Chrysostom and St. Augustine of Hippo. Attention will then turn to English developments related to the Gregorian Mission to England and St. Augustine of Canterbury, quickly moving on to the English Reformations. The Post-Reformation Era will then be discussed with reference principally to the First Elizabethan, Victorian, and Second Elizabethan periods and the development of distinctively Church of England notions of priestly and lay ministry. Of course, there is far more to write on the topic than is within the scope of this work. The aim here is to give some sense of the sometimes ancient and other times relatively recent considerations around priestly ministry that feed into early twenty-first century rural Church of England expectations.

Apostolic Fathers

The epistles of Ignatius of Antioch are foundational to the development of Ecclesiastical Orders for nearly two thousand years of Church history. In them, Ignatius makes the practical and theological case for the primacy of the bishop in the official life

of the Church. Standing outside of submission and conformity to the bishop is to stand outside of the Church (Holmes 168). Ignatius' epistle to the Ephesians appears to put forward a tidy hierarchical order. In 3.2 he clearly puts forward a harmony of mind that cascades from the Father to the Son to the bishops. He continues in 4.1 that the council of presbyters "tunes" themselves to the mind of the bishop. Presumably, then also the deacons continue in the hierarchical cascade.

However, in his epistle to the Magnesians, Ignatius puts forward two other dramatic syllogisms. In chapter six Ignatius likens the επισκοπου to God, and the πρεσβυτεροων to the council of the apostles. In chapter seven he likens the Church's obedience to the επισκοπου and πρεσβυτερων to Jesus' obedience to the Father and affirms the same in chapter thirteen. Yet further, in his epistle to the Trallians, Ignatius muddies the syllogistic waters again. In 3.1 of this epistle he likens the deacons to Jesus, the bishop to the model of the Father and the presbyters as the Apostles and God's council. Rather than bringing clarity to ecclesiastical orders, Ignatius appears to evidence the view that the organization is ambiguous. Perhaps this reveals that Ignatius was not intending to put forward the kind of structures that others have attributed to him.

Similarly, Clement does not seem to bring hierarchical clarity. In chapter 40 of 1 Clement, he seems to make an appeal to maintaining proper order within the church. He asserts that offerings and services must be conducted where and by whom God has ordered. He carries on to describe proper services and offices that the priests and Levites had been given. But he does not appear to transpose them into the Church's context save for a keen distinction of the laity. "The layman is bound by the layman's rules" (1 Clem 40.2-5). In chapter 42 Clement quotes Isaiah badly from the Septuagint and does seem to

indicate hierarchy. He uses Isaiah 60.17 to defend the notion that Christ is from God, the Apostles are from Christ and from the Apostles come bishops and deacons (Holmes 101). Confusingly, though, when discussing the occasion of and filling episcopal vacancy, Clement appears to use πρεσβυτεροι with ease in reference to the bishop's office (1 Clem. 44:4-5). So the hierarchical clarity is still obscured. Furthermore, it is not necessarily clear that a hierarchy (Father > Son > Apostles > Bishops > Presbyters > Deacons > Laity) is a necessary or desired feature.

So far, in the Apostolic Fathers, the kind of clear hierarchical ordering of bishop/overseer, presbyter/elder (πρεσβύτερος) and deacon, does not appear to be found, let alone bishop, *priest* (ἱερεύς), and deacon. Furthermore, the third vision of Hermas the Shepherd is of interest. In the vision, Hermas sees a great tower which is the Church (Hermas 11.3). The square cut and white stones of the tower which "fit at their joints," interestingly, are representative of "the apostles and bishops and teachers and deacons." They are described as being in agreement and mutuality, having peace with one another and "fit together" (Hermas 13.1). Two observations may immediately be made. One is that the conventional order of bishops, priests, and deacons is not wholly present. Secondly, there appears to be a blending or fitting together of what could be regarded as the ordained ministries of the Pastoral Epistles and the potentially 'lay ministries' as described in the previous section on Ephesians 4.11-12.

In conclusion of this section on the Apostolic Fathers, a few things are of note. Firstly, there does not appear to be such a well-described hierarchy of orders within the Church that are supposed to be in contrast with the Pastoral Epistles. Some activities, particularly those of a bishop, are outlined in Ignatius' epistle to Polycarp, Bishop of

Smyrna for instance. But most of the concern is regarding the qualities of overseers, as in the Pastoral Epistles. This is also seen in Polycarp's epistle to the Philippians in chapter six. Secondly, what could be distinct in the Apostolic Fathers is the authority, particularly of bishops/overseers and presbyters/elders as well as deacons. Such authority is also described in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. 13; 4.11; 5.1-2; Tit. 1.5, 11). Thirdly, there is really no mention of priests or priesthood except with reference to Old Testament orders like in 1 Clem 40-41. However, the description in these chapters do not seem to be in reference to what a bishop, presbyter or deacon might do in the Church that would be akin to Old Testament priestly ministry. It appears more to be with respect to the laity and ordained clergy staying in their respective lanes and respecting those boundaries. Lastly, it is in the affirmation of those lay and ordained ministries, their peacefulness, and their mutuality that the Church stands strong.

Pre-Nicene Shifts

Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage has been noted as one of the more influential Christian thinkers from the mid-third century until Augustine of Hippo in the late fourth to early fifth centuries (Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* 203–05). Up to the time of Cyprian, the Christian Church could be understood as a relatively loose federation of united but independent congregations (Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* 189). Cyprian, among other things, sought to highlight and establish the unity of the Church, particularly through the episcopacy as understood as descended from the Apostles, specifically, Peter and Christ's commissioning of him (Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* 204–06; Cunliffe-Jones 170). Cyprian also further developed notions around eucharistic sacrifice.

His Carthaginian predecessor and convert from paganism, Tertullian, seemed to emphasize feeding on the Lord's body with respect to the eucharist. While maintaining degrees of priesthood within the Church, Tertullian acknowledged the priestly identity of every Christian (Esler 286). He referred to the differentiated ordained priests as '*sacerdos*' and insisted on the "real presence and sacrifice" of Christ in the eucharist. This could be related to his pagan background. Perhaps it is due to Roman state pressure to legitimize Christianity as a real religion which offers sacrifice rather than a fringe memorial cult. Tertullian also seemed to leave room for a more symbolic or mystical understanding of the eucharist using terms like "a figure" or "representation" with respect to the body and blood and the bread and wine of the eucharist. But this language was likely being used in a sense where the thing symbolized or represented is really present by virtue of the symbol or representation (Haag 100–03).

Cyprian appears to bring these notions into fuller form, understanding the priest as a representative of Christ, making "sacrifice" and "oblation" through "the dominical victim" (Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* 211–15). Here also it is right to understand 'representation' in a less Reformation-era sense. Cyprian was putting forward an idea of the so-called 'real presence' of Christ not only in bread and wine, but in the priest offering sacrifice. The development of this sacrificial understanding of the eucharist would contribute to the appeals to Old Testament forms and patterns and blending them into Christian ones. Subtly, bishops, presbyters and deacons began being understood in terms of high-priests, priests and Levites (Cunliffe-Jones 177–78). Overseers and elders are now being more clearly understood as priests in a hierarchical order.

It is worth wondering why these Church Fathers looked back to the Old Testament differently than the canonical texts of the New Testament, particularly the Epistle to the Hebrews. Some might argue that this is because the canon was still being formed even as Eusebius and Emperor Constantine were working towards greater Christian and ecclesial uniformity in the early fourth century (McDonald 308–09). However, Hebrews was being used with some measure of authority by the likes of Justin Martyr and Clement of Rome well before then (McDonald 394). How was it that these notions of bloody sacrificial offerings in Christian worship were finding their way into the life of the Church? Kim Bowes and Kate Cooper have interesting offerings in this respect with reference to the Roman household. In short, their shared offering amounts to the accretion or influence of Roman paganism (perhaps even through the likes of Tertullian) and political order into the life of the Church and the effort to Biblically justify it.

Kate Cooper identifies the Roman household as a large or small network of family and slaves with both a private and public facing function (101–11). It is the sort of social grouping that one might consider with reference to Cornelius and his household in Acts 10, or the household of Crispus the synagogue ruler in Acts 18. Household devotion was commonplace in the Roman empire and included the whole family, slaves, and, in rural areas especially, other laborers and travelers (Bowes 28–35). It is likely this sort of an idea of a household that became the location of Christian gathering in the early Church (Bowes 49–50; Rom. 16.3-5; 1 Cor. 16.19).

In its first centuries, Christianity was a private, unofficial cult of the Roman Empire. Like other private cults, it did not receive public funding, nor did it serve any

recognized public benefit. Additionally, it was "fundamentally shaped by families and friends." Though it differed from other private pagan cults in the Roman Empire in its' development of city-wide episcopal oversight, in rural areas it still enjoyed a great deal of independence, and it was in Christian homes that many of "the great theological issues of the age were debated" (Bowes 20–21, 34-35, 41, 49-50, 99). This helps paint a picture of the context in which the eclectic nature of the early Church can be understood with its loose and ambiguous leadership structures and theological controversies.

Over and against the private unofficial cults was the public and official Imperial Cult of Caesar. Within this cultic structure, the Emperor was *pontifex maximus*, or a great high priest. Senators and other senior officials were priests, and this cascaded down to local priests who imitated cultic acts of worship, including bloody sacrifices, that took place at the Capitoline Temple and in its replicas scattered throughout the empire (Bowes 22). However, private Imperial Cult worship looked different. It was not publicly funded and was found in more rural locations financed by the landowner. It, therefore, was also able to be shaped and formed by the family, friends, and context of that particular rural location. Rural villas often featured their own cult chapels and cult priests who would offer sacrifices and mediate between the gods and the household, associate laborers, and even travelers (Bowes 34–35, 41).

Bowes suggests that as Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire in its first centuries, some of patterns may have worked their way into gentile Roman Christian practice. She suggests that just as the private expression of pagan cultic practices in rural areas differed from those of the public imperial cult, as rural households became Christian, they did not necessarily fall into conformity to the urban episcopal oversight.

Patrons appointed and employed their own priests who were able to minister according to the shaping influences of the household family and friends. Bishops were only one power in an ecology of powers including teachers, priests, patrons, and others. Though it is not until the sixth century that bishops are appointing all priests, one can see why Cyprian may have been anxious to assert unity though episcopal authority (Bowes 80, 99, 100-101).

Bowes identifies these households as locations of great theological debates. It is easy to imagine the progress. As the Roman household of a rural villa converts to Christianity, everyone, including its' pagan priest, is now Christian. Perhaps it is the local pagan priest, now Christian, who is now performing eucharistic cultic ritual for the villa household. Perhaps their previous notions of blood and sacrifice as well as their previous identity as a "priest" crept into the celebration of eucharist and feeding the theological debate of the day (Bowes 99–101). Bowes' work suggests that urban bishops were having to interact with these sacerdotal notions and find biblical corollaries that the writings that would become the New Testament could not support, but the Old Testament cult could.

This is problematic for various reasons. The Roman Catholic, Herbert Haag scathingly writes:

> The transference of biblical statements about the Israelite and Jewish priesthood to the priesthood of the Church is not only wrong in terms of the history of religion, illogical, and methodologically untenable. It is also the cause of the entire mistaken development that we have had to endure until the present. (42)

According to Haag the Bible for the Apostolic Fathers was still the Old Testament (83–84). The Epistle to the Hebrews, with both its robust teaching on priesthood and also contested authorship, may not have carried the kind of weight as the canon of the Old Testament. As urban patriarchs sought to resolve disputes of doctrine and practice, particularly around priestly ministry, the Old Testament would have been the reasonable authority to appeal to.

This is relevant to the current research for two reasons. First, it helps understand the background and historical developments within Christian ideas of priesthood that contribute to present day expectations and how they could be quite different from the New Testament witness. Secondly, it demonstrates the peculiarities of rurality. Christian or pagan rural contexts are more self-determined and fashioned after their context. They do not necessarily conform to urban norms. They confront 'urbanocracy' in an antithetical way that births a new synthesis. Understanding expectations of lay and priestly ministry in a given rural context is not simply for the purpose of creating a rural intervention. It may also be helpful in anticipating the evolution of expectations of lay and priestly ministry in town or urban contexts as well. Such is useful in cultivating church planting methodologies for episcopal ecclesiological contexts in the future.

St. John Chrysostom and St. Augustine of Hippo

With the advent of Christendom upon the ascent of Constantine as Emperor of Rome, the kind of pre-Nicene shifts discussed above begin taking their place more firmly. The trappings of Roman imperial life were being imposed onto the life of the Church (McGrath 138–40). Just as Roman officials and governors would have been regarded as priests within the imperial cult, so too Christian overseers or elders become

Roman officials, taking on their social status and garb, and are firmly regarded as priests. That notion of priesthood included notions of bloody sacrifice from a pagan Roman influence, and biblically and theologically justified or supported with appeals to Old Testament forms. In the late fourth century to the early portion of the fifth century, two thinkers would significantly inform notions of priesthood and the expectations of priestly ministry in the West until the Protestant Reformation. These are St. John Chrysostom and St. Augustine of Hippo.

Chrysostom's classic work *On the Priesthood* is a defense of his efforts to avoid ordination (Chrysostom 88; Ramsey 94). As most authors preceding him, there appears to be an ambiguity in his references to priesthood and episcopacy. It is therefore unclear if Chrysostom is avoidant of becoming a priest or bishop. In either respect, his avoidance of the post is caused by the loftiness of it. To preside at the eucharist is to stand in prayer as slayer of the sacrificial victim joined in the eternal heavenly worship. For Chrysostom, to offer the sacrament of bread and wine in communion is to offer the exclusive means of salvation (Chrysostom 28–30).

In addition to sacramental ministry, the priest is expected to minister the Word of God through preaching and teaching, to visit the sick, and to both comfort and challenge people (Chrysostom 65, 81, 93). In all of this, Chrysostom identifies a keen need for the moral purity of the priest. They are to, "keep their purity undefiled, and their unworldliness, their holiness, constancy and sobriety unshaken…" even to a greater degree than those "virtues which belong to recluses" (Chrysostom 92). Chrysostom carries on Cyprian's teaching related to eucharistic sacrifice, and they both emphasize the need for the priest presiding over the eucharist to be of a certain quality. Just as bread and

wine represent the body and blood of Christ in some way of real presence, so does the priest. Just as there is no salvation apart from Christ, there is no salvation apart from the Church, its' sacrament, and presiding priesthood.

This position was hardened by the rigorist Donatists, who rejected the efficacy of sacraments administered by morally unworthy priests, particularly those who "lapsed" from the faith during Diocletian persecution (McGrath 139, 152-55). Donatists would become the target of St. Augustine of Hippo who defended the legitimacy and efficacy of sacraments irrespective of the quality of the priest administering them (Cowdrey 451). In contrast to the Donatists, St. Augustine asserts that it is Christ who works grace through the channel of priests and sacraments and that such gracious work is not contingent upon the priest. Priests are indeed expected to an impeccable moral or cultic purity as representatives of the Church, but the efficacy of the sacrament is not contingent upon it. Just as they represent Christ and his Church, they also are people and represent humanity as well and are subject to common weaknesses (McGrath 156–159; Cowdrey 452).

By this time the Christendom expectations of priests are at least that of governing, teaching and administering the sacraments (Lamirande 501). Nevertheless, there is still an expectation of the laity, though perhaps only articulated in the margins. St. Augustine affirms the royal priesthood of the whole church and the dignity of each member of the church, lay or ordained (Lamirande 502). Chrysostom also affirms the "spiritual duties" of the laity (Chrysostom 86).

Gregory the Great and the Mission to England

For the turn of the seventh century, Pope Gregory I initiated an intentional mission to the Anglo-Saxons in Britain, even though the gospel had arrived in Britain

much earlier. St. Augustine of Canterbury would deliver the Roman Catholic Church and its theology and structures more fully to the island. According to Bede's Ecclesiastical History, Britain had been infected with the heresies of both Arianism and Pelagianism (Bede 53–56).

Questions about celebrating the eucharist in a more Roman or Gallic way eventually arose. Gregory's concern on the matter has less to do with Roman or Gallic forms and more than whether it is presided over in a godly and pious way (Bede 96). Gregory's principle priestly concern seemed to be related to the establishment of leadership of the Church and the qualities of those who would fill them rather than liturgical details. As St. Augustine's mission and ministry developed, he was eventually sent vestments, relics, and other paraphernalia from the Pope. These were used to help establish Roman Catholic infrastructures, and St. Augustine would appoint a Bishop of York to lead the church of the English (Bede 112–14). Augustine's ministry was marked less by sacramental concerns but with teaching, lifestyle, and the establishment of Roman Catholic infrastructure. This was consistent with *The Pastoral Rule of Gregory the Great*, demonstrating its impact on his ministry and the ministry of the church in England subsequently (Ramsey 94).

Roman Christianity or Christian faith more generally arrived in Britain with the Romans well before the Gregorian Mission complete with Metropolitans/Archbishops and martyrs (Duncan 32–34). Also, there were many non-Roman influences on Christianity in Britain. Most Christian influence arrived in Britain via Gaul where Eastern Christian faith had influence. The first Bishops of Lyons, Ponthius, and Irenaeus of Smyrna both had roots in the Roman province of Asia and connection to Johannine

influence. Also, two Desert Fathers, St. Paul and St. Anthony, are depicted on Celtic high crosses, evidencing their influence on Christian faith and practice in Britain before the Gregorian Mission (Joyce 23–24). Perhaps this Eastern affinity is why Pope Gregory was so keen to establish Roman Catholic infrastructure in England.

It is this sort of Romano-British Christianity that St. Patrick carried to Ireland in the fifth, or perhaps even fourth, century. Yet further, Patrick brought a greater commitment to the scriptures than to the Church Fathers or other conciliar decisions or canons (Hardinge 29–30). As such, an understanding of church leadership was formed and maintained in a more Pauline fashion than had elsewhere been developing. Bishops/overseers were elected from among the elders/presbyters/priests as firsts among equals. Clergy were free to marry. Qualification for office was related to character of the candidate. Teaching and sacramental ministry seemed to be their main responsibilities (Hardinge 123–25, 133). These are the kinds of realities of Romano-British Christianity that St. Augustine of Canterbury was encountering and writing to Gregory the Great about. Conflict between Roman Catholic and other ecclesiological thoughts, practices, and expectations have been present on the islands of Great Britain for a long time.

St. Thomas Aquinas and the English Reformers

Much has been written on the developments in church history throughout the Medieval period both on the European continent and the British Isles. Gregory the Great marked the beginning of the Medieval Age of Europe during which the division between the clergy and laity continued to harden (Lynch 24, 293). A deeper survey is beyond the remit of this work. Rather, attention will now turn to the scholastic St. Thomas Aquinas

and his contribution to the development of priestly understanding, then to the English Reformers.

St. Thomas Aquinas continues to loom large in Western Christian traditions. One of the many features of his work is his appeal to the ideas of Plato, Aristotle, and other ancient Greek and classical philosophers and applying them to Christian theology, especially in relationship to human nature, epistemology and other philosophical considerations (Aquinas 111–139, 451-453). This interest in Greco-Roman classics was accentuated in the period of the Renaissance which also gave rise to the Protestant Reformations and the English Reformation.

Aquinas used the Latin word *sacerdotium* in relationship to the priesthood as had been the custom in the Western tradition as far back as Tertullian (Haag 101). Furthermore, Aquinas affirmed, "Priests are appointed trustees and mediators between the people and God, presenting God's teaching and sacramental mysteries to the people, and the people's prayers, sacrifices and offerings to God" (Aquinas 406). They are regarded as those who have received a degree of power from the bishop toward the care of souls and to perform sacred functions, but only as underlings of the bishop (Aquinas 456–57). Aquinas does not restrict Christian ministry to the exclusive realm of these offices. He also acknowledges the gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers as states of being within the Spirit empowered Body of Christ (Aquinas 453–54). Nevertheless, Aquinas maintains that though everyone who is baptized shares in Christ's priesthood through the sacraments, some people such as priests are set aside to celebrate the eucharist, baptism, and other sacraments (Aquinas 556–57, 563).

From St. Thomas Aquinas, several features are keenly in place. First is a firmly embedded hierarchy of officers in the church with bishops sitting most firmly and at the top. Second is the special a sacerdotal nature of the priesthood as sacrifice makers and mediators between God and the people. It is here worth noting that 'the people' or, the laity, mean most everyone in the community as it is a Christendom context. Thirdly, there are legitimate gifts from Christ to his Body earlier referred to as the APEST gifts which are given for the building up of the Body. Lastly, classical Greek philosophy and reasoning are having an impactful place in Christian theological considerations.

The thirteenth century in England displayed a fervor towards the Western Roman Catholic Christianity introduced by the Gregorian Mission, cemented during the Medieval Age, and climaxing in the theological work of Aquinas. King Henry VIII brought the Reformation to England politically but not necessarily doctrinally. Reforms related to the veneration of relics or saints as well as the dissolution of the monasteries could be understood with relationship to cutting ties with Rome that were tightened by the Gregorian Mission as much as any sort of theological motivation (Rosman 28–31). It was not until Edward Tudor that theological reforms from the likes of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, could take shape.

The reformers like Cranmer, Hooker, Latimer, and Ridley are typically and appropriately regarded as Protestants and/or English Reformers. However, some are suggesting that 'Evangelical' is a better moniker as it distinguishes them from their continental counterparts. Their desire was to return to the *evangelium/euangellion*—the gospel—as it was first understood (Rosman 35; MacCulloch 2–3). For the purposes of this research, regarding them as Evangelicals also helps understand the following

centuries of tension between the more catholic and evangelical factions within the Church of England.

Of the major theological moves that Cranmer introduced was related to the eucharist. In the *1552 Book of Common Prayer*, Cranmer did not include any prayer of consecration over the bread and wine. Communicants were to consume in remembrance that Christ died for them, and basic wooden tables for holy communion replaced ornate altars. Notions of victim or sacrifice were stripped and so were notions of a sacerdotal priesthood. Rather, the evangelicals were more concerned with a priestly ministry of the Word (Rosman 37-38, 119; Sheils 39–43).

The Great British Matriarchies

Queens Mary and Elizabeth I

Queen Mary's ascension to the throne of England brought with it a violent backlash to the Edwardian reforms brought about by the likes of Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley. These Oxford Martyrs and many others would be burned at the stake as she oversaw a program to try and restore Roman Catholic doctrine and practice in England (Rosman 39–42). However, her reign was too short to reweave what the evangelicals had unraveled under Henry VIII and Edward Tudor. When Queen Elizabeth I took the throne, *The Book of Common Prayer* was amended and throughout England different customs that were more or less Roman or evangelical could be found (Rosman 43–48).

The First Elizabethan compromises had several impacts. One of the main impacts on parish clergy was the newfound permission to get married (Sheils 70–71). Another significant impact was the education of the clergy and particularly an increase in university education for them (Jacob 34–36). Most laity resented the

Protestant/Evangelical reforms and the dramatic alterations to customs that they were familiar with and held dearly. Parish ministry was no longer about rote and faithful performance of a familiar liturgy or ministering sacraments which were the salvific instruments of grace. It now required the ability for "communication of abstract ideas in a compelling form to the laity." Additionally, there was an increased participation by the laity in the liturgy of public worship (Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II: 1558-1688* 42–45; Jacob 187–91). Expectations of the laity and priestly ministry were diversifying. More was being expected of the laity than simply showing up faithfully to receive the ministry of the church through the ministry of the priest. Priests were being expected to do more than competently execute prayer book services and duly administer sacraments.

The compromises embedded through the lengthy First Elizabethan era paved the way for following centuries to feature diverse, inconsistent, and competing understandings of the priesthood and priestly ministry. This resulted in diverse, inconsistent, and competing understandings of the laity. In the seventeenth century Protestant Dissenters arose affirming the priesthood of all believers and rejecting notions of a special caste of priests within the church as well as their trappings of liturgy and worship in specified and authorized locations like church buildings (Rosman 106–07). By the mid-seventeenth century, Anglicanism and the Church of England could be understood as something ecclesiastically distinct in England apart from other Christian churches also present (Rosman 137). During this time, George Herbert wrote his reflections on Anglican priesthood in his classic *A Priest to the Temple, or The Country Parson, his Character and Rule of Life*. This work would become a standard for the

Church of England notion of priestly ministry generally, but especially in a rural context (Russell 52–55). Into the eighteenth century, partisanship within the Church of England was also taking firmer shape and was determinative of how priestly and episcopal ministry was understood and engaged in (Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II: 1689-1833* 90).

Within the Church of England, evangelical dissent continued into the eighteenth century. During this period of revival, the ministries of Whitefield, the Wesleys, and others like them were seen by some as subversive to the structures of the established church. New converts were also frustrated with the restrictive nature of prayer book services and other features of the established church that limited their participation. These revivalist evangelical dissenters of the eighteenth century were either pushed out or left the Church of England of their own accord. In many cases, these dissenting churches then became church planters and the impact of their dissenting thought proliferated throughout England (Rosman 169–74).

The Victorian Era

The Victorian era was profoundly dynamic and restless. Mass urbanization, innovation, industrialization, and population growth had profound effects on priestly and lay ministry. In and beyond Established, Non-Conforming and Roman churches, an energetic clergy and laity produced and explosion of ministry activity and church planting. Just as Dissenters were planting churches in the eighteenth century, the Church of England built over 5,000 churches in chapels between 1831 and 1901, in addition to the copious societies, schools and ministry organizations that begun in this period

(Bevins 10–11; Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II: 1833-1998* 4–7).

Anglican clergy in England also enjoyed a higher social status. They (at least those with the benefice living) were gentlemanly, university educated, and a "member of the leisured class", within which they would collaborate with the landed gentry toward community security (Nicholls 1–7). The ministry of the laity had been demonstrated through tasks such as unlocking the church building during the week and faithfully attending services (Nicholls 26). But, as seen above, it was also moving towards greater social action. Across the partisanship of the Church of England that had developed and solidified, one Anglican priestly ministry that seemed to cut across them was the role of the priest as a spiritual guide through the journey of maturation. Rather than instigator of revivalist conversion like Non-Conformists or sacramental minister like Roman Catholics, the priest "was expected to minister to individual souls" as "an integral part of the pastoral office" (Nicholls 33–34; Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II: 1833-1998* 15–16).

This worked well for a largely rural context with defined and reasonably sized populations. However, this situation became increasingly challenged by three main factors. Firstly, social factors such as industrialization, urbanization, and population increasingly exploding across the country were altering the fabric of English society. Secondly, the Darwinian scientific revolution concurrently came into full swing and university educated clergy began questioning or abandoning long held orthodox theological positions. Thirdly, this was compounded by the partisanship in the Church of England. People began looking less and less to parish clergy for the kind of spiritual

guidance that they once did as increasing secularism began taking root (Nicholls 32–34; Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II: 1833-1998* 18–32).

With the dramatic industrialization, urbanization, and population boom came a shift in what priestly ministry would come to mean. Rather than being a spiritual guide who was aware of the private lives of a manageable number of parishioners who generally accepted the priest's authority, parish priests became concerned with other social affairs such as overcrowded housing, drunkenness, prostitution, unethical labor practices, and all manner of abuses associate to urban sprawl. This task was also too much for parish priests to bear on their own and the need for an energetic laity to assist was necessary (Nicholls 36–48; Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II: 1833-1998* 33–36).

By the end of the Victorian era, a crucial journey had been taken. Pre-Reformation priests had been exclusive mediators of the Christian sacrificial cult for salvation. The laity were recipients of that ministry and were expected to live resultantly moral lives. In the Post-Reformation emerging Church of England, priests were becoming preachers, local theological educators, revivalists, and at times theological, ecclesiological and ministerial competitors in a diversifying ecclesiological landscape in England. What they shared was a role of spiritual guidance of the laity who were able to select, to a certain degree, the sort of guidance they might receive. Yet further, the laity were becoming increasingly involved in the delivery of the liturgy at public worship and ministries of the church in the community. At the turn of the twentieth century, Church of England priesthood in urban areas had shifted towards greater social action. Laity were

energized and required for participation in social transformation projects, church planting, and other endeavors. However, rural contexts retained many of the features of the pre-Victorian situation which was largely affected by urbanization. As notions, functions, and expectations of the priesthood changed, so followed the notions, functions, and expectations of the laity.

The Second Elizabethan Era

The interlude between the close of the Victorian Era and the commencement of the Second Elizabethan Era featured the devastation of two World Wars. There is much to be said about the priesthood with respect to military chaplaincy and the peculiarities of war-time parochial ministry. Such is beyond the scope of this work. One broad trend was the decreasing political role of the church and other social welfare and leisure activities being offered by more and more secular bodies. The concurrent comingling of war attitudes and propaganda with theological sentiments added to a "confident agnosticism" and "an emphatic presupposition of disbelief" (Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II: 1833-1998* 154–55).

This secularizing trend had already been underway in the late Victorian Era. The Anglo-Catholic theologian R. C. Moberly challenged this secularism and its partnering liberal theology. He emphasized the otherness of the church and clergy, connecting the Church of England in continuity with the ancient and medieval church. He affirmed a sacrificing priesthood and hierarchical superiority of the clergy over the laity. Moberly's thoughts would remain deeply influential and normative for much of the Church of England through most of the twentieth century (Greenwood 7–11, 29). Concurrently, from the late nineteenth century through the post-war period Britain would grapple with

the decline of its industrial dominance. Ideals around England's 'green and pleasant land' and idyllic rurality nostalgic of pre-Victorian times complete with the parish system and its priests would capture the national imagination and self-understanding (Nicholls 342; Wiener 1–2). This would come to form expectations of lay and priestly ministry in the Second Elizabethan Era.

Another key feature of this interlude is the introduction of Pentecostalism not only to Great Britain more broadly, but to the Church of England itself (Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II: 1833-1998* 204–05). Pentecostal and Charismatic theology and practice would unleash a dynamism in lay ministry. Spiritual gifts like speaking in tongues, healing, and prophecy became recognized as available to any believer. The result was a massive surge in lay ministry in and beyond the English-speaking world, impacting the church across denominations (Hylson-Smith, *Laity in Christian History and Today* 130–34). In addition to Catholic, Evangelical, and Non-conforming voices speaking to and modeling concepts of priesthood, Charismatic ideas would now be present. These features would become significant realities of the Second Elizabethan Era alongside the seemingly ever-present Church of England tug-of-war between the Catholic and Evangelical wings.

As the Second Elizabethan period commenced, Evangelicals and Catholics sought to confront the secularization and religious apathy in England in expectable ways. The Evangelicals appealed to the past successes and familiarity of revivalism. Large scale evangelistic events were held in London and elsewhere. The laity were affirmed as key instruments in the effort of national evangelism as well. Meanwhile the Catholics

doubled down on the centrality of the Eucharist and, therefore, priestly ministry (Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II: 1833-1998* 225–29).

Incumbent to the broader context and these different approaches are different expectations of lay and priestly ministry. The general population developed a "predisposition of disbelief," and the demand for pastoral services like baptisms, weddings, and funerals was only declining, let alone the desire for a Christian minister (Anglican priest or not) to be a spiritual advisor. The need had become evangelism. The debate was around the appropriateness or effectiveness of evangelistic technique and how priests and the laity fit into that.

Against these questions sat practical realities and other developments. The formation of the Church Assembly which became the Church of England General Synod with houses of Bishops, Clergy and Laity meant that the laity were firmly engaged in the governance of the Church of England at each level, bringing their practical expertise from other sectors. Another practical challenge was the decreasing resource available to support the existing Church of England infrastructure. Theological colleges lacked enough students, and parishes and dioceses could not afford to place them. Reports such at *The Development and Payment of the Clergy* (1964) and *Partners in Ministry* (1967) were suggesting the need to amalgamate parishes and find new models of ministry that were more sustainable (Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II: 1833-1998* 249–51).

Such models, though not intentionally, are more favorable to an evangelical model of ministry than inherited models which are more dependent upon consecrated ecclesial architecture and sacramental ministry mediated by an authorized ordained

priest. Though High Churchmanship had a prominent role in the immediate post-war period, from the 1960's, Evangelical Anglicanism would be in almost unabated ascent in the Church of England for the rest of the century, as well as its concepts of priestly and lay ministry. Other infrastructural changes ran alongside this evangelical ascent. Diversity in hymnody and liturgy would be developed as well as the ordination of women to the priesthood, which some of both Catholic and Evangelical Anglicans accept and others reject. Yet further, within a more evangelical context, charismatic theology, ecclesiology, and practice would gain traction. Nevertheless, the liberal voice within the Church of England maintained a greater audience more widely during this period (Rosman 288–93; Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II: 1833-1998* 237–54).

By the close of the Second Elizabethan Era, liberal voices external to and within the Church of England had been growing for 150 years. Notions of religion and priesthood seemed vestigial remains of human evolution that served sentimental and social purposes for those who would accept or value them. The resources to support the historical infrastructure of the Church of England were depleting problematically. The Church of England was a diverse communion with Evangelical, Catholic, Charismatic, and other Non-conforming theological and ecclesiological influences, and the broader context was favoring the evangelical influences. However, many of these realities were and are contingent upon unrelenting urbanization since the Victorian Era.

Summary

The survey reveals several contributing factors to contemporary notions of priestly and lay ministry. One factor is that some expectations of lay and priestly ministry

are truly ancient and resilient. Notions from the Apostolic and pre-Nicene Fathers continue to leave their legacy on thought and expectation today. Romano-British Christian forms and ideas persist through Celtic spirituality and feature some Eastern Orthodox influences. Beginning with the Gregorian Mission, Roman Catholic theology and ecclesiology was embedded as normative for priestly and lay ministry. The English Reformers followed by Dissenters, non-conformists, and Pentecostals have also played their part not just on the British Isles but also in the Church of England itself.

Along with these various ecclesial historical developments, cultural developments also impacted notions of priestly and lay ministry. The lingering myth of the English countryside loomed large. Urbanization and social evolution during the Victorian era, the decline and demise of Christendom, theological liberalism, and powerful social nostalgia have also played their part. Lastly, practical realities around resources to sustain Christendom ecclesial infrastructures, particularly in rural areas, continued to deteriorate resulting in a need to re-imagine priestly and lay ministry. Such re-imagining draws from and must contend with a plurality of competing theological, social, and practical delimitations and expectations.

Theological Foundations

Identifying and understanding theological foundations for lay and priestly ministry proves quite difficult. Much of the material about priestly ministry centers around the sort of person a priest ought to be and the kinds of activities a priest is meant to engage in. However, those qualifications and activities appear to be more practically than theologically supported. Whatever theological rationale rests behind these practicalities seems to be assumed, presumed, or taken for granted from historical

traditions like Gregory's *Rule* or Herbert's *Country Parson* rather than explicitly described. Also, some of that ambiguity and confusion is germane to the English language. The English word 'priest' is derived from 'presbyter' which is an English translation of the Greek word πρεσβύτερος (though 'elder' is often used in translation rather than presbyter'). This is quite a different the Greek word from ἱερεύς , which is typically the New Testament word that is translated "priest" with its sacrificial and mediative connotations (Bicknell 335; Torrance xiii).

In this section, theological foundations underpinning notions of the priesthood, the presbytery, and the laity will be explored from a particularly Church of England perspective. This is a necessarily delimitation considering the breadth of content available in this regard. As the Church of England regards itself as both Catholic and Reformed (Bicknell 330), some Roman Catholic theological reflection will be included as well as other Protestant, non-conforming sources.

The first thing one notices in examining the ordinal is the title of the service for priestly ordination. It is simply reads, "The Ordination of Priests, also called Presbyters" ('Common Worship Ordination Services'). During the presentation of candidates within the Church of England ordination service, it is affirmed that the candidates have "affirmed and declared their belief in 'the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England bear witness'" ('Common Worship Ordination Services'). These formularies are understood as the Church of England's Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal. However, these formularies house and articulate the

Church of England's doctrine and there is question regarding the relationship between doctrine and theology ('Section A' A2, A3).

Doctrine and Theology

A full discussion about the difference or not between doctrine and theology is beyond the scope of this research. However, it warrants an acknowledgement if doctrinal documents such as the *Book of Common Prayer*, the Ordinal, and the Thirty-Nine Articles are going to be appealed to with respect to theological backgrounds to lay and priestly ministry. Theology is most simply understood as "the study or science of God" (Erickson 22). The theologian Daniel Migliore identifies theology as a "continuous process of inquiry" related to God and God's activity in the world. This inquiry asks these and other questions of, and seeks answers from, the Bible. Then, it traces them through history, considers them philosophically, applies them practically and often seeks to organize them systematically (Migliore 9–11). Gerald Bray describes this as a continuous "analysis of Christian experience" of the God who is love (24–27). Kevin Vanhoozer borrows from Rowan Williams and Daniel Migliore explaining theology as the worship of God which "seeks to explain the meaning of God and his works" and verifies "true witness" of him. In so doing theology is faith's pursuit of understanding and the ability to "distinguish between true and false knowledge of God" (Vanhoozer 2, 4).

Vanhoozer goes further to describe doctrine as that which "has to do with what faith seeking understanding gets when its search is successful… the reward that faith finds at the end of its search" (Vanhoozer 4). Beyond the basic understanding of theology, Millard Erickson expands that theology is "that discipline which strives to give

a coherent statement of the doctrines of the Christian faith" (23). If theology is asking questions about God and his activity in the world, doctrine is an expression of the answers arrived at, even if provisionally, and a practical response to them. Vanhoozer elaborates, "doctrine directs the church to participate rightly in the drama of redemption" (77-78). The church's doctrine is very literally, the church's teaching—the result of theological activity and feeds its ongoing pursuit.

In her work, *Theology and the End of Doctrine,* Christine Helmer writes, "Theology has to do with the study of doctrine; and in particular times and places, doctrine has to do with human beings' experience with divine reality that comes to but also transcends those temporal and spatial specificities" (1). Such a statement gives one pause to wonder which comes first. Does theology produce doctrine or does doctrine give occasion for theology? What is the source from which theology gets its original content?

St. Thomas Aquinas held that pure reason was sufficient to instigate theological pursuit and no preceding doctrine was necessary. Karl Barth disagreed and emphasized the scriptures as the necessary initiating content. The first doctrine he addresses in *Church Dogmatics* is that of the Word of God (Erickson 32–33). If Helmer's definition is held, then doctrine, or teaching, has to do with human beings' experience of God which is both present in and transcendent of the time and place of that experience. In which case, the scriptures are the initial and progressive doctrines of God's people. St. John insists, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life" (1 John 1.1). St. John appeals to his experience of God in Christ that is

both situated in his context but also transcends it, from which he offers doctrines that inform a theology that, in turn, further develops doctrines.

The position of the present inquiry is that doctrine and theology have a reciprocal relationship. Doctrines are the articulation of the conclusion of theological processes and fuel its further pursuit. That process was and is instigated by the doctrines of scripture—those teachings which are the conclusions drawn from people's experiences of God in creation, Israel, and Christ and are canonized as authoritative and foundational for all Christian theological inquiry and process. The Church of England's historic formularies will be regarded as doctrinal. They are and contain the theological conclusions of the Church of England in particular times and places which, in turn, contribute to ongoing theological pursuits. These form the background to the variety of expectations of lay and priestly ministry in the Church of England (Briden and Hanson 49). Other theological works will be reviewed later.

The Thirty-Nine Articles

According to His Majesty's Declaration, the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England "do contain the true Doctrine of the Church of England agreeable to God's Word." In addition, they are intended to be submitted to in their entirety "in the plain and full meaning thereof" without putting one's "own sense or comment to be the meaning of the Article, but… the literal and grammatical sense" ('Articles of Religion'). This poses two interesting consequences. Firstly, in keeping respect to the requirements of the Articles themselves, other commentary on the Articles will not be added. Rather this research will engage with them on their own literal and grammatical terms.

Secondly, The Thirty-Nine Articles, set forth the "true Doctrine of the Church of England" in its entirety, with no one permitted "to draw [an] Article aside any way" ('Articles of Religion'). This is not the current practical reality in the Church of England hardly at all. For instance, Article Twenty-Four prohibits "publick [sic] Prayer in the Church… in a tongue not understanded of the people" ('Articles of Religion' 24). It is usual to find Church of England parish churches where ecstatic utterance, Latin phrases, or Elizabethan English feature with little or no concern for its comprehensibility to the people present. However, it could be argued that such doctrines as are set out in the Thirty-Nine Articles are not to be regarded as the faith of the Church of England but as signposts that 'bear witness' to that faith. The following review of the Thirty-Nine Articles is not intended to set out what Church of England expectations of lay and priestly ministry should be in any absolute or authoritative sense. Rather, it is intended to highlight a key point in the development of these expectations and an understanding of the institutional precedents that inform that variety of expectations that could be currently held.

The Thirty-Nine Articles set out various doctrines germane to this research. First is Article Nineteen, 'Of the Church.' This Article unambiguously sets out that the "visible" church is a congregation of the faithful where "the pure Word of God is preached and the Sacraments… duly ministered" ('Articles of Religion' 19). The plain grammatical sense of the Article indicates that church is more than simply the visible church; otherwise, there is no need of the adjective. The alternative to visible is not necessarily the singular option of invisible. There could be an obscured church in the sense of being less visible, as well. Perhaps this might be a situation where the scriptures

are not taught and/or sacraments not ministered. The Article does not suggest that a prayer gathering is not church. According to Article Nineteen, it simply is not the visible church. Some may take exception to this doctrine, even within the Church of England. Some would suggest that anything that does not conform to this Article is not church, full stop. Others would suggest that Fresh Expressions are no less visible than when and where the Word of God is preached and sacraments duly administered.

Article Twenty-Three is an interesting Article with respect to this research. It is to do with "Ministering in the Congregation." The Article states: "It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of publick [sic] preaching, or ministering the Sacraments in the Congregation, before he be lawfully called, and sent to execute the same" ('Articles of Religion' 23).

The Article itself is concerned with the office and the legalities. The literal, grammatical and plain sense in which the Articles are to be understood is interesting. It only speaks of the office of public preaching and sacramental ministry, not necessarily the activity of the same. Simply because an activity is incumbent to an office does not mean it is also exclusive to it. Also, the Article only speaks of the lawfulness of being called, sent, and taking on that office. When the Thirty-Nine Articles find something to be contrary to the scriptures or "repugnant to the Word of God," it says so clearly as it does with reference to purgatory and speaking in indiscernible languages in the congregation ('Articles of Religion' 22, 24). Lawfulness and a sort of practice is in view in this Article, not necessarily a theology of priestly ministry. Nevertheless, it certainly has informed an understanding of priestly ministry in the Church of England.

Articles Twenty-Five to Thirty-One are concerned with the sacramental life of the church. Article Twenty-Eight makes a theological statement and subsequent practice regarding the Lord's Supper. It rejects transubstantiation and affirms the reception of the body and blood of Christ in holy communion is "heavenly and spiritual" in manner. As such, further on in Article Thirty-One, any sense of eucharistic sacrifice is utterly rejected. It strongly reads, "…the sacrifice of Masses… were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits." Any notion or theology of a sacrificing priesthood is anathema to the Thirty-Nine Articles, even if it is an enduring phenomenon throughout the life of the Church of England and sometimes features in as an expectation of priestly ministry for some parties within it ('Articles of Religion').

At base, the Thirty-Nine Articles do not elaborate on theological frameworks, backgrounds, or rationale. They simply make a variety of contextually relevant statements that are sometimes theological and at other times practical. Those practical statements do have theological rationale that could be investigated from the writings of the English Reformers, but such is not often present in the Articles themselves. In Article Twenty-Five and Twenty-Eight no theological rationale is put forward for why the sacrament is not to be "gazed upon," "lifted up," or "carried about;" they simply forbid the practice ('Articles of Religion').

Similarly, the Thirty-Nine Articles do not elucidate a theology of priesthood or priestly ministry. They outline priestly activities such as ministering Word and Sacrament in Article Twenty-Three. They make it clear that priestly sacramental ministry at the Lord's Table is in no way sacerdotal in Article Twenty-Five. Certain theological stances significant to the Reformation milieu are certainly present and witness is borne to them,

but a full theology of the priesthood, priestly ministry, or the laity would be difficult to extract from their plain, literal, and grammatical sense.

The Ordinal

The *Book of Common Prayer* is one, if not the chief, repository of the doctrine of the Church of England. General Synod legal advisors Briden and Hanson write, "Doctrine determines liturgy and a study of liturgy reveals doctrine." They further highlight that the doctrine of the Church of England is broadly that of the Western Catholic Church at the time of the Reformation with some alterations resultant of the English Reformation (Briden and Hanson 49). In this way, the *Book of Common Prayer* must be understood as taking some theological premises for granted, as making clear affirmations of certain theological premises that are particularly important, and as making some doctrinal/theological points that distinguish it from other western traditions.

The Ordinal is not properly a part of *The Book of Common Prayer* or other subsequent liturgical publications, though it is published together for convenience. Additionally, an attempt at constructing a theology of priesthood from the Ordinal would also need to account for the theology embedded in a prayer book's liturgies as the rubric for practical priestly ministry in the context of public worship and sacramental ministry. The Ordinal does not necessarily appear to explicitly offer 'a theology of priesthood' as such. It tends to offer an ecclesiology that includes an office of priesthood with incumbent duties, from which a theology may be inferred or constructed. In the introductory remarks, the office is regarded a "necessary," worthy of "esteem," and the ordaining bishop identifies God's honor and the church's edification as its purpose both in opening remarks and in praying the Collect. Following the Collect, Ephesians 4.7ff is

read identifying the APEST gifts as given for the "perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" ('The Ordering of Priests').

This insinuates one of three things. One insinuation is that occupants of the office of priest would be drawn from those who are apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherd/pastors, and/or teachers. Or it could be insinuated that those who are priests are compelled also to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherd/pastors, and/or teachers as the means by which they will fulfill their priestly office building up the church and glorifying God. Lastly, it could mean that the office of priesthood sits primarily, secondarily, and/or tertiarily within one or more of the APEST gifts.

Following the Ephesians readings, a Gospel reading is selected from either Matthew 9.36ff or John 10.1ff. The people of God are regarded in both of these readings as sheep in need of shepherding. The John reading draws particular attention to Jesus' identity as the chief and true shepherd and need for faithful under-shepherds. The Matthew reading indicates the need for a multiplicity of laborers. In either respect, the Ordinal sets out a doctrine that sees priesthood as keenly pastoral with the chief pastoral role belonging to Jesus and others joining in with his pastoral activity ('The Ordering of Priests').

The notion of the sacrifice of the shepherd himself in the John 10 reading of the Ordinal is further accentuated in the prayer of consecration in the *Book of Common Prayer* which affirms Jesus' "one oblation of himself once offered." Any cultic or ritual sacrifice is exclusively associate to that of Jesus' sacrifice of himself as a singular occasion. Furthermore, in the post-communion prayer the identification of any other sacrifice being made is that of "praise and thanksgiving" as well that of the worshippers'

"souls and bodies" as living sacrificial offerings ('The Lord's Supper or Holy Communion').

Rather than offering ritual sacrifice, in the Ordinal, the priest's relationship with sheep is consistently that of shepherding, not sacrificing, unless such is self-sacrifice for the sheep, following Christ's model. Concerning the congregation, the ordaining bishop declares to the candidates: "they are the sheep of Christ, which he bought with his death, and for whom he shed his blood." The shepherding activity is described as seeking out lost sheep and "to be messengers, watchmen, and stewards… to teach and premonish, to feed and provide" ('The Ordering of Priests'). Returning to the service of Holy Communion in the *Book of Common Prayer*, it is safe to include eucharistic and sacramental ministry as an understanding of "feeding." In speaking of the eucharistic sacrament, the prayer of humble access invites the communicant to "eat the flesh" of Jesus. In the post-communion prayer, it is affirmed that God "dost vouchsafe to feed us… with the spiritual food" of Jesus' body and blood ('The Lord's Supper or Holy Communion').

The Ordinal appears to be concerned far beyond sacerdotal functions and refuses to define a priest by it. The ordaining bishop sets the expectation of priestliness asking the candidates to commit themselves to instruct their people from the scriptures, to faithfully minister doctrine and sacrament, to "banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's Word," and to be diligent in personal prayer, Bible study, and personal discipleship. The Holy Spirit is imparted to the candidate to forgive sin and to be a "faithful dispenser of the Word of God and of his holy Sacraments" ('The Ordering of Priests').

From the Ordinal and *Book of Common Prayer* sacerdotal priestly ministry is attributed exclusively to Jesus Christ. Notions of sacrifice engaged in by the ordained priest is shared with the whole people of God and is in respect to an offering of praise and thanksgiving to God and the offering of one's living self in worship to God. The ecclesial office of priest is much more akin to the New Testament understanding of a presbyter, an elder who shares in the oversight ministry of the bishop. They do this by teaching the scriptures, ministering the sacraments, forgiving sin, and modelling a spiritually mature Christian life.

The Alternative Service Book 1980 (*ASB 1980*) makes the presbyterial nature of Church of England priesthood more explicit, being titled, "The Ordination of Priests (also called Presbyters)" (*The Alternative Service Book 1980* 351). The parenthetical reference draws a clearer line of direction back to the office found in the Pastoral Epistles passing around the sacerdotal developments in church history.

Whereas the *Book of Common Prayer* Ordinal had scripture readings more concerned with notions of shepherding, the *ASB 1980* Ordinal takes a more prophetic tone. Isaiah 61.1-3 is read associating the great jubilee with the ministry of the priest. Malachi 2.5-7 is read out, prophetically calling for priestly ministry that features teaching and instruction. Then, the congregation joins in, reciting verses from Psalm 145 praising God before New Testament readings commence. 2 Corinthians 5.14-19 is read, drawing attention to the loving ministry of reconciliation which is correlated to the jubilee of Isaiah by their presence together in this selection of readings. Finally, the gospel reading is taken from John 20.19-23. Here, the resurrected Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to his disciples giving them authority to forgive sin. These readings together position

presbyterial priestly ministry squarely in the realm of forgiving sin, ministering God's reconciliation, worship, and instruction as a realization of Isaiah's jubilee within the work and role of the priest as a member of God's worshipping people (*The Alternative Service Book 1980* 351–54).

The *ASB1980* then features a more lengthy introduction to the declaration. In it the bishop affirms the shepherding nature of presbyterial priestly ministry. The bishop continues with a long list of activities that this shepherding entails: to proclaim God's word, call to repentance, absolve and forgive sin, baptize and prepare candidates for baptism and confirmation, preside at Holy Communion, lead worship and prayer, to intercede, bless, encourage, minister to the sick, and to prepare the dying for death. Like the *Book of Common Prayer* Ordinal, they are to be messengers, watchmen, stewards, teachers, admonishers, feeders, providers, searchers out of and guides for God's people and all of this requires the Holy Spirit's presence and assistance (*The Alternative Service Book 1980* 356–57).

At the point of ordination in the *ASB 1980* Ordinal, there are three interesting differences from the *Book of Common Prayer* Ordinal. As the ordaining bishop stretches their hands towards the candidates in prayer, the bishop identifies Jesus' gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to equip the church for ministry. Then the bishop prays on, giving thanks for the candidates to be ordained "to share this ministry entrusted to your Church." It would appear that the *ASB 1980* Ordinal draws an ecclesiological line of distinction between the ordained office and work of a priest and that of the so-called APEST gifts discussed previously. Though they are distinct, they

share a common purpose in the ministry of the church (*The Alternative Service Book 1980* 362).

Secondly, while the bishop's hands are laid on the candidates, they identify priestly ministry toward God's flock as watching over and caring for them, absolving and blessing them, proclaiming the gospel, offering spiritual sacrifices and ministering sacraments (*The Alternative Service Book 1980* 362–63). Here there is a slight elaboration than is found in the previous Ordinal. There is a third interesting difference from the *Book of Common Prayer* Ordinal. In both cases, the new priest is given a Bible. In the *Book of Common Prayer* Ordinal, the giving of the Bible is accompanied by the commission "to preach the Word of God, and to minister the holy Sacraments" ('The Ordering of Priests'). Whereas the *ASB 1980* commissions the new priest to "preach the gospel of Christ and to minister his Holy Sacraments" (*The Alternative Service Book 1980* 363). The Bible readings selected in the *ASB 1980* Ordinal, the lack of specifically identifying the refutation of false teaching, and the priority of the gospel proclamation indicates a direction of emphasis in the ministry of word and sacrament around the gospel message, rather than points of theology.

All things considered, however, the expectation of priestly ministry that is laid out in the *ASB 1980* Ordinal is not sacerdotal. Again, the Church of England takes a decidedly evangelical liturgical tone connecting priestly ministry to that of presbyterial shepherding. Furthermore, it is 'evangelical' in its focus of priestly ministry in connection to the gospel itself, Isaiah's jubilee, and ministries of forgiveness, reconciliation and new creation. Moreover, this ministry is shared with apostles,

prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The *ASB 1980* Ordinal recognizes these lay ministries and has an expectation of them in the life of the church.

Common Worship gets even more explicit in its Ordinal. It titles the liturgy, "Ordination of Priests, also called Presbyters." It no longer leaves the presbyterial association of the priesthood as a parenthetical elaboration but an explicit understanding. The introduction delineates between this presbyterial ministry that is Anglican and other notions of priesthood. The introduction immediately identifies an ecclesiology of the royal priesthood of all followers of Jesus who praise God, are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, witness to the love and God, and "work for the coming of his kingdom." The expectation and doctrine of the Church of England in the *Common Worship* Ordinal is that ministry is the work of the whole people of God in Christ ('Common Worship Ordination Services').

In the ecclesiology of the introduction, presbyterial priests have a particular ministry of servant leadership in this royal priesthood. Such servant leadership is "ordained to lead God's people in offering praise and the proclamation of the gospel." Furthermore, "They share with the Bishop in the oversight of the Church" and they are to be patterned after "the Good Shepherd" who is Christ. Their ministry is that "of word and sacrament" and their sacrifice is that of themselves as "a living sacrifice" ('Common Worship Ordination Services').

Interestingly, during the liturgy of the word in the ordination service, there are no prescribed Bible readings. Rather, the acclamation preceding the gospel reading simply alludes to John 15.16 reading, "I chose you and appointed you, says the Lord, that you should go and bear fruit that shall last." And all respond, "Alleluia" ('Common Worship Ordination Services'). An immediate assumption might be that the ordination candidates

are in view and that fruitfulness is an expectation of their priestly ministry. However, given the broader context of the introduction and its affirmation of the priestly ministry of all God's people, as well as the shared response after the acclamation, it is reasonable to understand that the *Common Worship* Ordinal expects fruitful ministry from the laity and clergy alike, and this is a theological and doctrinal stance of the Church of England.

As the ordination service continues to the declarations, classic themes remain while newer features emerge. These presbyterial priests are immediately identified as "servants and shepherds" with a variety of responsibilities and tasks expected of them. They are to proclaim God's word and "watch for signs of God's new creation." Like the *Book of Common Prayer* and *ASB 1980* Ordinals, they are to be messengers, watchmen, stewards, teachers, and admonishers, feeding God's family and searching out God's children to guide them. They are expected to call people to repentance and declare absolution and forgiveness. Furthermore, these priests are expected to bless, baptize, preside at communion, to "unfold the scriptures," and minister to vulnerable people who may be in need, poor, sick or dying. These activities, however, appear to be an elaboration on how to "tell the story of God's love" which they are expected to do "with all God's people," an affirmation which precedes the list above.

The paragraph then ends with the expectation that the priest will "discern and foster the gifts of all God's people, that the whole Church may be built up" ('Common Worship Ordination Services'). This discernment and fostering of "the gifts of all God's people" appears to be a broadening from the APEST gifts mentioned in the *Book of Common Prayer* and *ASB* 1980 Ordinals. The Ordinal attached to *Common Worship* is explicit in its doctrinal conviction that "ministry" is the work of all of God's people, even

beyond the APEST gifts, and ordained presbyterial priestly ministry is expected to support and promote it.

This participative disposition continues in The Ordination Prayer. It begins by affirming, again, the royal priesthood of the whole Church and continues to praise God for the gifts given to equip his "holy people for the work of the ministry." The candidates to be ordained priests are identified as one particular way in which that ministry is supported. These candidates are "to share as priests in the ministry." The emphasis appears to be on the shared nature of ministerial responsibility. With hands laid on the candidates, the ordaining bishop then calls the work of the Spirit up them to proclaim the gospel and minister sacraments. They are to declare blessings and proclaim Christ's victory and absolution. The only sacrificial notion is that of offering spiritual sacrifices ('Common Worship Ordination Services').

By way of summary so far, in the reciprocal relationship between theology and doctrine, the Church of England doctrines around lay and priestly ministry are progressively articulated through its liturgies. Church of England doctrine clearly understands priestly ministry as presbyterial. It is principally a ministry of oversight and shepherding which is shared with the bishop and is consistent with the New Testament and Patristic content in that regard. It also lacks much serious support for any sacerdotal notion of priestly ministry. Rather, any sacrificial worship is spiritual in nature. It is an offering of praise and thanksgiving and a living sacrifice of oneself to the worship of and obedience to God. The oversight and shepherding ministry each of the Ordinals expects of the priest is related to ministries of word and sacrament as well as pastoral care.

Alongside the progressive clarity of priestly ministry in the Church of England is also the progressive clarity of lay ministry therein. At the inauguration of the third Christian millennium, Church of England doctrine explicitly expects the whole of the laity to be actively engaged in the ministry of the church. Lay and ordained ministry cannot even be confined to that of bishops, priests, and deacons alongside apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor/shepherds and teachers. Church of England doctrine expects the whole people of God to be engaged in the whole mission of God. Lay and ordained offices are there for the building up and equipping of the body to that end.

Recent Literature

Identifying theological backgrounds for broad topics like priestly and lay ministry in the Church of England is complex. As has been outlined earlier, there are a plethora of theological tributaries that feed into the Church of England stream. Celtic spirituality with its' pre-Gregorian and Eastern roots lingers alongside Roman Catholic influences. Reformed and Protestant theologies flow in along with Dissenting, Evangelical, and Charismatic theologies. These tributaries do not necessarily combine to form a coherent single stream. Neither have they joined once at one point in time, but each of those tributaries continue to feed into the stream. For instance, the Counter-Reformation as well as First and Second Vatican Councils continued to feed a Roman Catholic notion of priesthood into the Church of England, as have and do other Protestant and non-Conforming developments. Rather than joining a coherently formed stream, they seem to flow alongside one another as currents in the same riverbed called "the Church of England." Each current seems distinctly identifiable, yet at times intermingling at the

fringes with no consistent pattern, rather as a sort of disordered and somewhat chaotic braid.

Further confusing the issue is the lexical ambiguity of the English word "priest" itself. It is nearly impossible for the various streams above to engage in coherent conversation when using the same word so profoundly differently. Lexically, as has been noticed previously, the English word "priest" is derived from "presbyter" a transliteration of the Greek word πρεσβύτερος, meaning "elder" and having oversight associations. Sometimes "priest" is used with sacerdotal refence to the Greek word ἱερεύς or the Hebrew *cohen*, carrying all of their cultic, ritual, and sacrificial connotations. At the more common level, for many people in England, "priest" just means "vicar" and *vice versa*. The understandable imprecision with which the word "priest" may be used makes identifying a theology of priesthood or priestly ministry nearly impossible, let alone expectations thereof.

Robin Greenwood makes a similar observation. In reflection of the situation in the late twentieth century, he recognizes that "what was missing was a coherent theological statement of priesthood for today." Neither was he able to identify a "theological rationale" for the "shape" of priestly ministry (Greenwood 1, 3-4). Amid such malaise one may be compelled to appeal to a common authority such as the Church of England's historic formularies. However, as noted previously, these offer doctrines or some measure of theological statement but not theological rationale. Furthermore, conformity to those statements is hardly commonplace.

This is not to say that there is no theological rationale behind these various phenomena or notions of priestly and lay ministry in the Church of England. What it

means is that such an investigation is beyond the scope of most research. Theological backgrounds for any one of the various tributaries into the Church of England stream would require volumes to cover, let alone all of them together. Much recent literature on priestly and lay ministry follows the example of the great Michael Ramsey who took "an empirical approach, beginning with the Church's practical experience and working back from this to understand the ministry" (Ramsey 10). Rather than offering theologies of priesthood or laity, doctrines of such are taken for granted from historic formularies and are elaborated on with relevance to the author's context.

Ramsey's classic *The Christian Priest Today* follows this motif. As the quote above specifies, Ramsey takes an empirical approach, and he identifies what an ordained priest is and what they do. But he offers little theological framework within which to understand why these features are the case. Most concisely, Ramsey identifies an ordained priest as, "Man [sic] of theology, man of reconciliation, man of prayer, man of Eucharist; displaying, enabling, involving the life of the Church" (Ramsey 10). Immediately the inadequacy of Ramsey's approach is identified. Following his empirical approach, the priest is a man, with no theological justification or rationale presented.

Ramsey offers this empirical description in answer to his question, "Why the Priest?" (7). He then goes on to answer 'what' a priest is in a way that infers the 'why' rather than answering it. If an ordained priest is a theologian, minister of reconciliation, person of prayer, and presider at the eucharist, it may be inferred that an ordained priest is a person of mediation between God and creation. This further infers a theology that sees God as separate and/or distant from creation in some way that requires mediation. Lastly,

it infers a theology, or ecclesiology that the ordained priest has a uniquely necessary role in that mediation.

In this classic, Ramsey was addressing a group of deacons to be made priests. Their context was one of increasing secularization and an increased role of the laity in the church of the latter half of the twentieth century. The burdensome question was whether or not ordained clergy really mattered (Ramsey viii, 1–2). His considerations bent towards a unique and necessary ordained priestly meditation. Some fifty years later, Stephen Cottrell writes similarly. His book, *On Priesthood,* also seeks to answer the questions, "Why priests exactly, and how should we understand the ministry of the ordained priesthood in a church where ministry does indeed belong to everyone?" He further seeks to answer that question from the Ordinal which he regards as the definitive source and guide for what ordained priestly ministry in the Church of England is expected to be (Cottrell 2, 4).

The bulk of Cottrell's work is, again, more descriptive of what a priest is and does, than a theological rationale for why ordained priests exist, which is actually his presenting question. The much larger *Part 2* of the book elaborates on what he believes the Ordinal means when it describes an ordained priest as servant, shepherd, messenger, sentinel and steward. The Ordinal describes much more than these five. These five are simply those that Cottrell has delimited his work too. However, *Part 1* of his book does cover some useful theological underpinnings upon which the rest of the book is built.

Cottrell identifies that the theological starting point for understanding priesthood and ordained priestly ministry is an ecclesiological one. He explicitly and ecclessiologically approaches the priestly nature of the whole church and the role of

ordained priests within it. Cottrell acknowledges the priesthood of all believers but makes a clear distinction that this does not mean the priesthood of each believer. He is careful to identify that the priestly nature is corporate rather than belonging to each individual member. This priestly nature is related to the Greek word ἱερεύς and is shared with the priesthood of Jesus, rather than πρεσβύτερος which refers to the ordained priest who shares in the oversight ministry of the bishop (Cottrell 11–16).

Appealing to the Ordinal, Cottrell carries on his ecclesiological understanding of ordained priestly ministry. It is to share in the apostolic ministry of the bishop as servant leaders. The servant leadership of ordained priests is to "serve the whole Church and build it up" and to be missional. Cottrell appeals to the Ordinal with reference to the consecration of bishops in order to understand this ordained priestly ministry. He quotes the Ordinal, "Bishops are ordained to be shepherds of Christ's flock and guardians of the faith of the apostles, proclaiming the gospel of God's kingdom and leading his people in mission." Ordained priestly ministry is deeply connected to episcopal ministry and has to do with ministry to the people of God toward mission in God's world (Cottrell 15–18).

The building up of the body of Christ and God's mission in the world theologically infer at least two things. First, it infers that the body of Christ is in need of maturation, completion, or perfecting. Following Cottrell's earlier caution about attributing to individuals that which belongs to the church corporately, how the body of Christ is made complete might have various understandings individually or corporately. A more holistic approach likely holds onto one without letting go of the other. What is important is that a theology of transformation is central to Cottrell's understanding and

requires some kind of guidance or oversight that ordained people, specifically bishops and priests, provide (Cottrell 13).

Robin Ward of St. Stephen's House was weary of "forty years of drastic liturgical revision" and notes the "Catholic vitality" within the Church of England (141). By way of Hooker but really appealing to the scholastic theologian Thomas Aquinas, Ward seeks to put forward the primacy of cultic eucharistic sacrifice as the hallmark of priestly ministry in his work *On Christian Priesthood*. Ward acknowledges that Hooker did not favor calling presbyters priests due to the sacrificial connotations (15). Nevertheless, Ward is clear as he begins by writing, "The premise of this book is that Christianity is a religion which offers sacrifice by means of a priesthood" (8).

In a typical Thomist way, Ward founds his argument upon Aristotelian philosophy and works his way through St. Augustine of Hippo. He does so to establish the fundamental importance of a religious, cultic, and therefore sacrificial need for the virtuous flourishing of society (Ward 8-9, 21). Ward recognizes the sacrificing priesthood of Christ and the sacrificing priesthood of all believers by virtue of their sacramental union with him. Ward then also recognizes the unique priesthood of those ordained to preside at the eucharistic table, offering a continuation of Christ's sacrifice and offering the sacramental occasion for people to be united to Christ's priesthood and salvation. It is this ministry that Ward insists is the distinctly priestly ministry of bishops and presbyters (Ward 84, 92–93).

Ward offers a robust theological rationale for his notions of priesthood and priestly ministry. He appeals to the New and Old Testaments, the Patristics, and other theological greats. He identifies the old covenant sacrificial system which anticipated

Christ's sacrifice which is in turn perpetuated in eucharistic celebration more or less unchallenged until the Reformation (Ward 53, 58). His ambition is to excite the Catholic proclivities within the Church of England and its Catholic heritage. However, in digging beyond his scriptural and traditional presentations, they are found to be Christian expressions of what is ultimately a classical philosophy regarding the nature of religion and its role in society.

Robin Greenwood offers his own theological considerations related to ordained priestly ministry. As mentioned previously, Greenwood notices a lack of coherent theological reflection on priesthood within, at least English, Anglicanism at the end of the twentieth century. This combined with an increasingly active laity and dramatic changes to the geographic landscape of the parish left many clergy bewildered as changes of expectation in what priestly ministry should mean set in. In his work, *Transforming Priesthood*, Greenwood seeks to supply a theological framework within which such new expectations could rest securely (1-4).

He begins this quest by tracing the theological influences on the then current understanding. Beginning with Moberly and working through the twentieth century, he identifies the sort of Catholic notions that Ward would justify as the prevailing influence (Greenwood 29). He then continues to describe the then-present context in a way that is at odds with the more Catholic models that had been prevailing. Presenting a relational Trinitarian theology from the likes of Barth and Moltmann he offers a theological, ecclesiological and missiological frame of priesthood (Greenwood 74–77, 86-91). He lastly appeals to Roman Catholic Vatican II influencers like Yves Congar, Hans Kung and Edward Schillebeeckx. He desires a move from a distortedly Christo-centric view of

individualistic clerical ministry within an institutionalized church to a more balanced, Trinitarian, Spirit-filled communion of believers which generates its own leaders in a way that is inclusive of a Catholic identity that is a meaningful feature of the Church of England (Greenwood 148).

From this Trinitarian theology, Greenwood offers a Reformed and Catholic theological understanding of priestly ministry in the Church of England. It is firstly non-hierarchical and is exercised from within the eucharistic community and not over or above it (Greenwood 141–43, 148-150). From within the eucharistic community, priestly ministry is also a presiding ministry of "focusing and distributing" the ministry of the whole church. This looks like discerning God's work in the world, blessing it, and witnessing to God in and through it (Greenwood 155–57).

Graham Tomlin takes up this idea of blessing as paradigmatic of priestly ministry. He too recognizes the difficulty of finding common theological ground upon which to understand priestly ministry within the diverse Reformed and Catholic context of the Church of England (Tomlin ix-x). He goes further to reject many approaches to understanding priesthood as not really being theological at all. Rather, they are often historical, tracing the development of priesthood through the millennia of God's people. Or they are anthropological, tracing notions of priesthood across denominations or religions and finding common denominators. To Tomlin, in order for a thing to be theological, it must be related to the "nature and action of God" which, to be Christian, must necessarily be derived from "God's presence and work in the person of Christ" (Tomlin 3–4).

Drawing from the Epistle to the Hebrews, Tomlin principally defines the priestly ministry of Christ as that of incarnational mediation (22–29). After elaborating on the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, Tomlin further identifies two other Christological elements of priesthood alongside an interceding mediation. Christ's mediating priesthood also perfects creation and results in blessing. Then, Christ offers this perfected humanity and creation back to the Father as an act of worship (Tomlin 48–49).

In chapters four and five of *The Widening Circle*, Tomlin elaborates on the mediating, perfecting, and offering work of humanity in creation and of the church in humanity. This will be addressed more later. In chapter six Tomlin turns his attention to the mediating, perfecting, and offering work of ministers in the church in an ecumenical way. Like Greenwood, Tomlin rejects the notion that clergy "leave the ranks of the laity." Rather, they are simply "a distinct kind of lay person, with a distinct calling within the whole" (Tomlin 115).

But in the same way that Christ's incarnation makes him fully a part of humanity, his mediation means there is some kind of connective tissue to God. Similarly, as the priest is well and truly a part of the laity, there is some kind of connective tissue to Christ that makes such mediation possible. But that incarnational mediative connectivity is only to the church, according to Tomlin, so as not to undermine or disrupt the perfecting of the church whose mediative priesthood is to the world (Tomlin 119–20). It is therefore the role of the priesthood within the church, according to Tomlin, to perfect the church. Their role is to "protect and nurture the Church" (Tomlin 121). They do this by Spirit enlivened

ministries of word and sacrament, through pastoral care, and wise leadership (Tomlin 123–31).

As Tomlin carries on to the priestly ministry of offering, he departs from some typical priestly tropes. Rather than describing a priestly worship offering to God with reference to eucharistic sacrifice, thanksgiving, praise or living sacrifice of self, the offering Tomlin highlights is that of the church herself. To Tomlin, the priestly offering of the ministerial priesthood is the mature, perfected bride of Christ (131–33). While this offering is impossible to make apart from effective ministries of word and sacrament, of which eucharistic ministry is vital, these ministries find their appropriate place, not as ministerial ends themselves, but as the means by which the worshipful *telos* is pursued. It keenly focuses an attention and expectation of priestly ministry.

It is here that a pivot of attention to theological foundations of the laity will now be considered, and Tomlin's *The Widening Circle* remains of interest. Often, the flow of discussion related to priestly ministry is progressive and cascading. The pinnacle is consistently Christ's priesthood. The Old Testament priesthood precedes it and progresses towards it. Then notions of priestly ministry within the church cascade down from Christ's priesthood to bishops and priests, and perhaps to the priestly people of God called the church. As it cascades often there is an increasingly diluted sense of priesthood or ministry that features or is inferred.

Tomlin takes a different approach. After describing Jesus' priesthood and priestly ministry, he turns to the priestly nature of humanity as a race. He introduces humanity as intrinsically mediative. He appeals to Genesis 1-2 to show how they are made of the stuff of God and the stuff of earth. They mediate God's presence in creation being made in the

divine image and likeness (Tomlin 74–76). They perfect creation. Just as God began bringing order out of the chaos of the water, humanity was to continue that ordering as they were to rule over creation as God's agents (Tomlin 78–79). Lastly, they offer creation back to God, either as the first fruit offerings of the likes of Cain and Abel or in offering their creaturely selves back to God in submission as worship (Tomlin 81–83).

Problematically, this priestly ministry of humanity has been disrupted. Tomlin then offers the church as the priestly entity to humanity. It is able to mediate as it is both of humanity and of God. It works to perfect humanity, bringing it toward its priestly purposes. It offers the gospel to the world and worship to God (Tomlin 96–112). However, to Tomlin this priestly identity of the church is not simply a corporate identity or ministry. Earlier was noted Stephen Cottrell's view that the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers did not mean, to him, the priesthood of each believer. Cottrell stressed the corporate nature of the royal priesthood of the whole church. Tomlin contests this view, emphasizing each Christian's priestly ministry to one another in interdependence rather than self-mediation (Tomlin 64–67). Robin Greenwood agrees with respect to this priestly interdependence in the whole of the church. He is further insistent that such priestly ministry of each member of the church is "not a derivation from the priesthood of ordained ministry… to say otherwise is to denigrate the laity as having no special responsibility and to see ordained priesthood as the essence of the Church" (Greenwood 154). The priestly nature of the laity is derived from the priestly nature of Christ and the laity's union with him by faith.

According to Tomlin, creation was created to reflect and express "the goodness and glory of God himself" rejoicing and being joyful in it. Following this, such joy is

meant to be the fruit of the priestly perfecting ministry of humanity (Tomlin 72–72, 79). Robin Ward agrees in his own way. Preferring the vocabulary of "beatitude," he affirms that such ecstatic joy "is the true end of redeemed human living." Such beatitude, Ward believes, is resultant of the religious cultic sacramental ministry of the church which requires a sacrificing priesthood. The role of the laity is to receive this sacramental ministry from which their moral living in the world may result in anticipation of such beatitude (Ward 3, 8, 24-27). In this way, lay ministry is to receive the sacramental ministry of the priesthood, live a Christian moral life in the world, and support the cultic sacramental apparatus. In Church of England contexts, this support usually looks like serving as Churchwardens, Parochial Church Council members, sacristans, musicians, or vocalists all tending to those things requisite to the priest's execution of sacramental ministry—buildings, fabric, ornaments, etc.

However, there are plenty of Roman Catholic voices that would not agree with their Anglo-Catholic colleague. Pope Pius XI's Catholic Action sought to engage Catholic laity beyond such a description above and engage them as participants in the Apostolic witness in the world (Haag 14–18). Appreciating the Greek word λαός as the root of the English word "laity" and understanding it as referring to the whole people of God, Hans Kung was unwilling to draw a line of distinction between clergy and laity (Marriage 71). Edward Schillebeeckx saw the laity as sharing in the evangelistic mission of the church as those who bridged the gap between the altar and the everyday spaces in which ordinary people lived. Nevertheless, he still saw them a bit as the foot soldiers of the institutional church out in the world (Borgman 146–47). Even *Lumen Gentium* sets out Roman Catholic dogma in this regard. Though it maintains a distinction between the

common priesthood of all believers and the ordained priesthood within it, the dogma still affirms that evangelistic activity is the province of every believer and even recognizes that "all the faithful can baptize" making at least one sacrament a province of lay ministry also (*Lumen Gentium* 10, 17).

Aside from the dogma in *Lumen Gentium*, these voices are only one strand of Roman Catholic thinking on the topic. However, they along with the likes of Yves Congar and Cardinal Suenens were influential in the results of Vatican II which would see the progressively narrowed view of ministry in the Roman Catholic church re-widened. Nevertheless, some Roman Catholics continue to critique Vatican II's results. William Rademacher observes that it retains a hierarchical notion of levels of being and ministry within the church that automatically contrasts the priesthood from the laity and subordinates them. He further wonders if Vatican II "produced a kind of schizoid Christ" by this essential difference between clergy and laity, and he critiques Vatican II for not offering a theological understanding of the laity but relegating them to a "secular character" (Rademacher 78–82).

The likes of Alan Hirsch would be delighted to see such affirmations of lay participation in the Apostolic witness and evangelistic ministry from his Catholic brethren, but they would also lament the fallings short of Vatican II and would wish to take it further. In *The Forgotten Ways*, Hirsch asserts that missional movements require apostolic ministry. However, this cannot be conceived as an Apostolic ministry wrapped up in the institution of the church understood by some kind of Apostolic succession of hierarchical leadership with lay foot soldiers. It requires recognizing, affirming and deploying the gift of apostles given from the ascended Christ. Not only are apostles

required but so are the rest of the gifts of Ephesians 4.11, complete with prophets, pastor/shepherds, teachers, and evangelists. It is not that the laity are separate from the clergy and ought to participate in evangelism, even baptizing. It is that evangelists are a gift from among the laity, as are presbyter/priests, or any other of the APEST gifts (Hirsch 189–90).

Stefan Paas agrees. Laity are the people of God and as such form his royal priesthood. To Paas, "The term 'priest(hood)' points to the nature of salvation." This means that every believer is not only a permitted participant in, but an essential part of God's mission in the world and the practice of evangelism (Paas 204). The whole people of God represent God to the people and the people to God (Paas 213). In this way Paas affirms a doctrine of the missional and evangelistic ministry of all God's people. He derives it from a theology related to 1 Peter and the Apostle's description of God's both priestly and pilgrim people on mission with God, among whom some are ordained as priests in particular (Paas 173–82, 187-192).

Summary

The Church of England struggles to produce a coherent theology of priesthood and laity. It has progressively articulated an ecclesiology that affirms the priesthood and ministry of the whole people of God, among whom some are set aside as bishops, priests, and deacons in order to serve the people of God and God's mission in the world. But rather than articulating a theology of priesthood and laity, the Ordinal and liturgies of the Church of England outline the moral qualities of a priest, clarify the priest as a presbyter, and list out the kinds of things an Anglican presbyterial priest should do. These would

generally be characterized as pastoral care/shepherding and ministries of word and sacrament.

In the variety of more recent theological writing on priesthood several themes emerge. One theme is simply the practical need to reimagine priestly ministry. Secondly, there is a focus on pastoral care. It is not particularly theologically reasoned; it simply takes the pastoral ministry for granted and elaborates on it practically. Thirdly, the question of the role of the institutional activities of the church are brought to bear on such pastoral care and theological flavors come to the fore. Among the various theological persuasions present in the Church of England, the two broadly prevailing views are and always have been Catholic and Evangelical. Lastly, for those truly seeking to identify or construct a theological framework for clergy, laity and their ministries, there appears to be a true effort to root such a framework in the Trinity and the priestly ministry of Christ, and to understand it from the scriptures and traditions of God's people.

Research Design Literature

Tim Sensing's *Qualitative Research: a Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* and Michael Patton's *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* are two key sources regarding overall structure and design for research of this nature. The qualitative and multi-method approach seeks to "engage in a critical dialogue that leads to several sets of rich data, resulting in the possibility for deeper understandings" (Sensing 54). Interviews are key to this deeper understanding and to "find out what is in and on [the participant's] mind… to access the perspective of the person being interviewed" (Patton 278). In order to elicit the richest data, Patton suggests a general interview guide (280–84).

Whitney and Trosten-Bloom advocate an emotional and logical flow to their appreciative interviews rather than those that are intentional and scripted. This helps guide the participant into the deeper parts of their thinking to access the richest responses. They advocate good questions which invite stories of what is or has been rather than opinions or theories. They invoke a "mental scan", and they are ambiguous enough to allow space for the participant to explore and provide richer responses (Whitney 146–53). Somewhat differently, in his general interview guide, Patton suggests that interview questions need not be carefully crafted, worded or ordered. Rather, a basic checklist is to be kept to ensure that the relevant topics and themes were explored and the flexibility to probe more interesting responses at greater depths may be retained (Patton 280–84).

Summary of Literature

This chapter has reviewed biblical, historical, and theological literature related to the expectations of lay and priestly ministry in a Church of England context. Biblical foundations with respect to priesthood, elders, overseers, and the so called APEST gifts were reviewed. From the New Testament, there is not a caste or class of people within the Church that could be understood as 'priests' (ιερεύς). Rather whenever priest or priesthood is mentioned, it is in reference to Jesus principally. Secondarily, following the type of paradigm mentioned above, it is attributed to the whole of the Church and each of its members rather than a specific office, officer, caste, or class within it. When it comes to offices or officers within the Church, 'priest' (ιερεύς) fails to be mentioned in the New Testament text in any way that would be recognized with respect to the historical offices in the institutional Church. The three orders of bishop/overseer, elder/presbyter, and deacon are readily recognized. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor/shepherds, and

teachers may also be, whether formally or informally. All are necessary for the building up, mission and ministry of the church.

Historically, the review identified several contributing factors to contemporary notions and expectations of priestly and lay ministry in the Church of England. These expectations of lay and priestly ministry are influenced by the Apostolic and pre-Nicene Fathers, Romano-British forms and ideas that persist through Celtic spirituality and feature some Eastern Orthodox influences, Roman Catholic thought, and the impact of The English Reformers, Dissenters, non-conformists, and Pentecostals. The lingering myth of the English countryside and the country parson has a legacy too. Urbanization and social evolution during the Victorian era, the decline and demise of Christendom, theological liberalism, and powerful social nostalgia have also played their part. Lastly, practical realities around resource to sustain Christendom ecclesial infrastructures, particularly in rural areas, resulted in a need to re-imagine priestly and lay ministry. Such re-imagining draws from and must contend with a plurality of competing theological, social, and practical delimitations and expectations.

The theological review identified that the Church of England struggles to produce a coherent theology of priesthood and laity. It has progressively articulated an ecclesiology that affirms the priesthood and ministry of the whole people of God, among whom are the APEST gifts, and some are set aside as bishops, priests and deacons in order to serve the people of God and God's mission in the world. But rather than articulating a theology of priesthood and laity, the Ordinal and liturgies of the Church of England outline doctrines regarding the moral qualities of a priest, clarify the priest as a presbyter, and list out the kinds of things an Anglican presbyterial priest should do. These

would generally be characterized as pastoral care/shepherding and ministries of word and sacrament.

In the variety of more recent theological writing on priesthood several themes emerge. One theme is simply the practical need to reimagine priestly ministry. Secondly, there is a focus on pastoral care. Thirdly, the question of the role of the institutional activities of the church are brought to bear on such pastoral care and theological flavors come to the fore. Among the various theological persuasions present in the Church of England, the two broadly prevailing views are and always have been Catholic and Evangelical. Lastly, for those truly seeking to identify or construct a theological framework for clergy, laity, and their ministries, there appears to be a true effort to root such a framework in the Trinity and the priestly ministry of Christ and to understand it from the scriptures and traditions of God's people.

To garner the riches data and deepest thoughts of real people on the ground in the Dorking Deanery of the Guildford Diocese of the Church of England, Appreciative semi-structured interviews are the most useful method. By virtue of asking a question, an intervention is introduced. A logical and intentional order of questions is good to begin with. However, alongside that interview structure ought to be a basic checklist of the kinds of rich data being mined. This allows for deviation from the structure of the interview in order to follow a vein that will lead to the richest deposits within the participant.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter outlines and describes the methodology of this project. First, it will describe the nature and purpose of the project. Then it will restate the three research questions from chapter one and show which instruments will collect data with which to answer those questions and how. Following on, the ministry context within which the research is taking place and the research participants will be described, as well as relevant ethical considerations. Lastly, research instrumentation, data collection and analysis will be described.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

Church planting in Post-Christendom Europe can be a different endeavor than church planting elsewhere. It must factor in long and established institutional and cultural patterns and the presence of an established church. In the rural parishes of the Dorking Deanery, only established Church of England churches may be found. Some of those parish churches may only be a little over one hundred years old. Some of them will be centuries old. Nevertheless, each of them will be shaped, formed, and influenced by the centuries of practice that preceded and produced them. Additionally, their communities will have been equally shaped, formed, and influenced by those same practices of the established church. This research is particularly interested in the patterns and practices related to lay and priestly ministry.

Within the context of an established and episcopal church structure, the distinction between clergy and laity is pronounced. Much of the practice and expectation

of priestly and lay ministry in the established church will have been formed over centuries. Those formative centuries were centuries of Christendom, a socio-political and cultural context that no longer exists in England. If one seeks to plant churches within the organizational and architectural structures of the Church of England and its rural parishes, it would be very helpful to understand the expectations of lay and priestly ministry in those parishes from which to design an intervention, if deemed necessary. Therefore, this research aimed to discern the expectation of lay and priestly ministry in the rural parishes of the Dorking Deanery in the Diocese of Guildford through semi-structured interviews with clergy, congregational laity, and community members in these parishes.

Research Questions

RQ #1. What does "ministry" or "ministry of the Church" mean to the clergy, congregational laity, and community members of these rural parishes?

To answer this question, I asked it fairly directly to the participants interviewed from my purposive sample as described in the section below. Questions 6-8 in the semi-structured interview invited the interviewee to offer their thoughts about how community members, congregants, and their parish priest understand "ministry" or "the ministry of the church". Question 9 invited the interviewee to offer their own understanding of "ministry" or "the ministry of the church". When the interviewee was the parish priest themselves, question 7 was omitted.

Questions 6-8 stood as topic questions that would help the interviewee think about "ministry" or "the ministry of the Church" by considering how others might understand

the word or phrase. This was an effort to help them begin to clarify their own thoughts, feelings and understanding of "ministry" or "the ministry of the Church" in question 9.

RQ #2. Among the clergy, congregational laity, and community members of these rural parishes, what expectations of the ministry of the Church are placed upon priests and the laity?

In order to obtain more rich responses, I chose to apply Appreciative Inquiry principles to my semi-structured qualitative interviews. As noticed previously, qualitative interviews are intended to discover thoughts, views and values of participants, hopefully without the views of the interviewer interfering (Patton 278). However, Appreciative Inquiry's principle of simultaneity indicates the unlikelihood of that. The introduction of the question itself instigates change, introduces an idea, or offers a framework. Inquiry is intervention.

Therefore, Appreciative Interview methodology was applied to questions 10-13. In order for the intervention that was the inquiry to move the participant in a positive direction, these questions were formed with reference to what has been best, rather than what has been broken. They also look forward with hopeful idealism. Through recalling the best of the past and imagining an ideal future, stories are told rather than theories or concepts pondered, and rich data on expectations of lay and priestly ministry may be captured that otherwise would have been left locked away in the participant's heart and mind (Whitney 150–53).

RQ #3. Among the clergy, congregational laity, and community members of these rural parishes, how flexible are those expectations?

Interview questions 10-13 are also aimed at capturing data on this research question. Questions 11 and 13 gave the opportunity to explore a hopeful ideal of priestly and lay ministry. If this is very different from the best experience they are able to recall in questions 10 and 12, then there is probably a good deal of flexibility or range in expectations of lay and priestly ministry. If, however, the future ideal is firmly fixed to the past highlight, there is likely little flexibility or range to the participant's expectations. Similarly, if the participant's highlights or ideals vary greatly from their understanding of 'ministry' or "the ministry of the Church" in questions 6-9, then there could be great flexibility. Also there could simply be inconsistency.

Ministry Context

The Dorking Deanery of the Diocese of Guildford is composed of the ecclesiastical parishes in and around the town of Dorking, Surrey, within the Mole Valley local government district. As a whole, Move Valley is classified as Urban with Significant Rural (rural including hub towns) according to the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification of Local Authority Districts. Dorking is an historic market town and is the lone Built-up area Hub Town of the Deanery (Bibby and Brindley 4–6).

The parishes of the Dorking Deanery are also found within and approximately congruent to the Mole Valley Wards of: Beare Green; Capel, Leigh and Newdigate; Dorking North; Dorking South; Holmwoods; Leith Hill; and Westcott. These wards consist of a combined population of 28,283. This is approximately one third of the 87,386 in the Mole Valley according to the 21 March 2021 census. The Mole Valley has the following demographic features: It is approximately 51% female to 49% male. It is only

approximately 24% aged 65+ years old and only 15% aged 0-14 years old. It is nearly 93% white. Nearly 56% identify as Christian (*Mole Valley*).

The parishes within the Dorking Deanery that surround Dorking itself are mostly found within the boundaries of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The geography is hilly and forested and features some working agricultural land as well. In addition to standard English crops such as rape weed being farmed, cows, sheep and other livestock are kept. Notwithstanding these rural features and lighter population densities, it is in surprisingly close proximity and easily commutable distance to London. Other amenities and resources associated with urban areas are also in close proximity like shopping, hospitals, and entertainment. Additionally, two busy international airports are in close proximity in Gatwick and Heathrow. Such rural quality of living with access to urban amenities and resources drives property values up and results in a relatively wealthy community.

While many of the communities in the Dorking Deanery are quite wealthy, many of its parishes are financially struggling. This combined with dwindling attendance and an aging congregation make for bleak outlooks for the future of many of the churches in the Dorking Deanery. When a parish priest retires or moves on from one of the parishes in the Dorking Deanery, there is usually talk of amalgamation with other neighboring parishes and/or reduction of clerical provision from one full time stipendiary priest per parish to either one full time stipendiary priest across an amalgamation of parishes, reduction to a part time priest to a parish, or a part time priest across an amalgamation of parishes. Also, in these rural parishes, Church of England churches are the only ones present.

The rural parishes of the Dorking Deanery include:

- St. Barnabas, Ranmore
- St. John the Evangelist, Wotton
- St. James, Abinger
- St. Mary, Holmbury
- Christ Church, Coldharbour
- St. Mary Magdalene, the Holmwood
- St. Peter's, Newdigate
- St. John the Baptist, Capel
- St. Margaret's, Ockley
- Holy Trinity, Westcott

Participants

As mentioned previously in chapter 3, there are three general categories of participant. One type of participant is a priest with principal responsibility for one of the above rural parishes in the Dorking Deanery. Secondly, are congregational laity who worship at one of the above churches. Lastly, participants will be selected from among the residents of one of the above parishes who do not attend church anywhere.

Criteria for Selection

The principal criterion for selection in semi-structured interview was residence in one of the rural parishes in the Dorking Deanery. As rural parishes of the Dorking Deanery were a key delimiter in the research, awareness of life in those parishes was a critical factor in the purposive sample. Interviewees were not necessarily expected to worship at the church in the parish they live in; however, an awareness of the context of rurality in the Dorking Deanery was an important factor.

Of those living in one of the rural parishes of the Dorking Deanery, some interviewees needed to be ordained as priests in the Church of England. This was another significant factor for an adequate purposive sample group. In determining the expectations of lay and priestly ministry, priestly input was deemed necessary. For the

same reasons as priests needed to be interviewed, laity needed to be interviewed. It was also important to capture the voice of the laity both within the congregation and out in the community.

Ethnic and racial diversity was less of a priority given the significant lack of ethnic diversity in the relevant parishes and the purposive sampling being also a typical case rather than an extreme or outlying case sampling (Patton 173). There would be interesting data to be gathered from an outlying case sampling. However, practical considerations related to availability, sample size and efficiency rendered a typical case sampling to be sufficient. Typical case sampling also meant that younger participants would be more difficult to select. However, where younger people and ethnic minorities were available and met purposive criteria, they were gladly selected.

Sample size included eleven participants. Four Church of England priests, four congregational laity, and three community members were selected. Those were selected based on their potential as information rich participants. Practical considerations were also made with respect to sample size (Patton 183–85).

Description of Participants

As described elsewhere, participants were selected as a purposive typical case sampling from among parish priests, congregational laity, and non-church-going community members. An even distribution of male to female was pursued. Given the demographics of the parish churches, the age range of participants trended towards the upper ranges. Younger participants were pursued where possible, especially from the non-church-going group.

Ethical Considerations

Previous to any interview, consent forms were obtained by the participants. All participants were adults unable to be classified or understood as vulnerable in a safeguarding sense. Each participant was able to read, question, and be satisfied with the research they were participating in with full ability to withdraw at any time and have any data collected to that point destroyed or deleted.

The interview was recorded digitally and digitally transcribed by READ AI. In addition to participant identities being anonymized with either initials or a number, any names or identities shared in the interview were kept confidential and anonymized by a number or initials. Any transcript or summary produced by READ AI was redacted manually by the researcher according to the same anonymizing practices. Digital recording, transcriptions, and other records were kept on the researcher's biometrically and password secured laptop, tablet, and/or handheld device, and any handwritten notes on paper were securely stored in the researcher's home study. Any recording, transcripts, or notes were deleted or destroyed upon the completion of the research. No research assistants were used in gathering, transcribing, or analyzing interviews. The researcher's dissertation coach also had access to research data and signed a confidentiality agreement.

Instrumentation

The overall structure and design of the research was informed by Tim Sensing's *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* and Michael Patton's *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather the richest data. The design of the research

sought to discern the expectation of lay and priestly ministry in the rural parishes of the Dorking Deanery by observing and triangulating the thoughts and feelings of participants on the topic and their actual behaviors.

In order to gather data on the thoughts and feelings of actual priests and laity in these parishes, interviews were designed in an effort to "find out what is in and on [the participant's] mind… to access the perspective of the person being interviewed" (Patton 278). In order to elicit the richest data, the structure of the interviews was informed by Patton's general interview guide, Sensing's semi-structured interview, and Whitney and Trosten-Bloom's Appreciative Interview structure, key components, and guide (Patton 280–84; Sensing 107–09; Whitney 146–53).

This provided an open-ended, appreciative, and fluid instrument whereby participants could widely explore the themes the interview sought to gather data on and to triangulate what is communicated with the behaviors, thoughts, and feelings of the participants. According to Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, good questions invite stories of what is or has been rather than opinions or theories. They invoke a "mental scan", and they are ambiguous enough to allow space for the participant to explore and provide richer responses (Whitney 150–51). This research, therefore, took a more semi-structured design utilizing some of the structure of Appreciative Inquiry and the flexibility of a general interview to maximize potential for the richest data to be gathered.

After an initial introduction, stage-setting questions (1-6) were asked to establish rapport and gather demographic data. Deviating from Appreciative Inquiry and leaning more into a general interview guide, rather than reciting a lead-in text with sub-questions, questions 6-8 invite the participant to explore the topic of "ministry" or "the ministry of

the church" for themselves. In so doing, they retained the appreciative qualities of ambiguity and space for participants to begin to explore and provide richer data from the following questions.

Questions 9-13 invite the participant to explore and share their own thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about "ministry", "the ministry of the Church", and lay and priestly ministry. These all come together to inform and reveal their conscious and unconscious expectations. Question 9 was a knowledge based or opinion/value question seeking to gather data on the participant's understanding of "ministry" or "the ministry of the Church". Questions 10-13 bring in an appreciative quality, inviting the participants to recall a story where priestly and lay ministry met or exceeded their expectations. This set of questions also invited the interviewee to describe a future ideal of what lay and priestly ministry might look like. Such stories and imaginations revealed much more of what sort of expectations the respondent had, whether they were aware of it or not. Question 14 is a concluding question giving the opportunity to the participant to add anything else they thought was important that had not been discussed or offer any other additional feedback.

Pilot Test or Expert Review

The research instrument was formed under the guidance of the researcher's dissertation coach, Dr. Gavin Wakefield. Additionally, Dr. Milton Lowe offered helpful expert review to further refine the research instrument towards gathering the richest data.

Reliability & Validity of Project Design

To ensure the reliability of the research, various levels of triangulation were employed. The research triangulated interview participants. Parish priests, laity in the congregation and community members who do not go to church regularly were all

included in the purposive typical case sample group. The semi-structured interview design also encouraged participants to consider others' perspectives to triangulate their own views, and it allowed the researcher to triangulated within each participant themselves. These perspectives as well as my own as the researcher served to form a collection of rich data from which a "'thicker' interpretation" could be arrived at (Sensing 73–75). This design and its questions were intentionally shaped to bring about the most rich responses from participants. This helped ensure that the credibility of the research could be trusted and a thick description of the expectations of lay and priestly ministry in the rural parishes of the Dorking Deanery could be arrived at (Sensing 195–96).

Data Collection

This research was a pre-intervention project. It sought to discern and describe the expectations of lay and priestly ministry in the context described above. This data is valuable to informing potential church planting or revitalization interventions in these contexts. As such, this pre-intervention project required qualitative research. According to Sensing and his sources Merriam, Denzin and Lincoln, qualitative research is concerned with discerning meaning, systematically seeking answers of and in natural social situations and the people who inhabit them (Sensing 57). The overall interview structure generally followed the Appreciate Interview guide. It began with an introduction overviewing the research, addressing matters of confidentiality, that the interview would be recorded, how it would be stored and for how long, what would be done with the data collected, and a confirmation that the participant was happy to continue.

To gather the richest data and elicit understanding in the social situation of a rural parish and its church with respect to expectations of lay and priestly ministry, qualitative interviews were conducted. Participants included four priests, four congregational laity, and three lay community members selected from rural parishes in the Dorking Deanery. The interviews took place via Zoom and were recorded and transcribed with REAL AI. Qualitative interviewing was the chosen instrument based on its effectiveness in accessing "the perspective of the person being interviewed" (Patton 278). The structured aspect of the semi-structured interview was shaped by Appreciative Interview structure and guidance which are also aimed at maximizing potential for the richest responses (Whitney 146, 150-53).

Sensing puts forward that DMin projects are "action research that introduces an intervention" (58–60). This seems apparently contradictory, then, for a DMin project to be a pre-intervention project. However, when integrating Appreciative Inquiry and its second principle of simultaneity, such problems resolve. The simultaneity principle suggests that inquiry instigates change and is therefore an intervention (Whitney 55). Taking this into account the interview structure promoted uplifting recollections of the past and idealistic hopes for the future from which do discern participant's expectations of lay and priestly ministry. Yet further, the opportunity for participants to become more consciously aware of their own expectations in a hopeful direction could itself be a helpful intervention for these parishes, some of which are struggling.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed into electronic files and stored on the researchers biometrically secured laptop. Field notes were also taken during the interview to capture emotional, nonverbal, and other cues that added depth, texture, and richness to

the data. Also, key follow up questions could be written down during the interview and returned to so as to not disrupt the flow of the interviewee's thought and responses. Other observations deemed to be significant were captured in these interview field notes as well.

Following the interview, I utilized a summary sheet to capture any summarizing thoughts, highlight any particularly rich data that was shared, capture any other rich data that had not been noted during the interview, or take note of any preliminary interpretive germs. Lastly, I took note of anything that did or did not go well in the interview on a quick action sheet. This included wording tweaks to the questions or if a safeguarding issue was revealed that required action.

Data Analysis

Inductive analysis was conducted on the research data. Indigenous concepts and typologies were identified through cross-case and cross-interview analysis (Patton 376, 390-93). The semi-structured design of the interviews allowed different responses to the same questions to be grouped together and compared against each other and the data collected from primary sources. Additionally, responses from priests, congregational laity, and community members on central research themes were able to be compared, contrasted, and triangulated. Alongside the inductive identification of indigenous concepts and typologies, sensitizing concepts and typologies were deployed and determined as an aid to the interpretive process.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter will describe the participants in the research and the evidence they provided through the research instrumentation toward answering the research questions. First, the participants will be described. Following that, each of the research questions will be identified followed by a description of evidence provided from each category of participant: parish priest, congregational laity, and community member. The description of evidence for Research Question #2 will be broken into two parts. One part will address the description of evidence regarding expectations of priestly ministry. The second will address the description of evidence regarding expectations of lay ministry. This chapter will conclude with a summary of major findings derived from the evidence described.

Participants

There were eleven purposively sampled participants in the semi-structured interviews which were all reflective of the rural parishes the research is concerned with. All were white, native English speakers, middle-aged or older. All had some kind of connection to their parish Church, even if not a Christian or a churchgoer. Ten were middle-class with one participant being the Lord of the Manor in one of the Parishes. Nine participants were British, one American, and one Australian.

With respect to ordination, four participants were priests in the Church of England. Two were full-time stipendiary, and two were part-time House for Duty priests. All were positions of responsibility in an amalgamated parochial context. Three of the Priests are approaching retirement with one having retired since the interview. One

participant was a Licensed Lay Minister (LLM). Another participant had experience and training as a youth minister but was not officially recognized in any way accredited by the Church of England. Two participants were Churchwardens. Three participants were not Christians or attenders of church; however, all maintained close links with their parish church through charitable activity.

Research Question #1: What does "ministry" or "ministry of the Church" mean to the clergy, congregational laity and community members of these rural parishes? Description of Evidence

Across all categories of participant, certain themes emerged. Common themes were present related to "ministry" or "the ministry of the church." These were mostly related to the presence of the building, congregation, and a parish priest toward the worship services, occasional offices, pastoral care, and community engagement of the church. However, there was significant diversity in how each of those matters were understood in their workings out. This difference is seen in styles of worship, degrees of proactivity or passive availability for pastoral care, the degree to which efforts are obviously or peculiarly "Christian," and the degree to which God is represented or present in or by these efforts.

Parish Priest Responses

Within the priestly responses in the semi-structured interviews, several common themes emerged. Alongside those themes each priest also had a particular take. The overarching theme was presence in the village. That presence was then manifested in themes around the actual building itself, the regular worship that takes place in it, and occasional offices such a baptisms, weddings, and funerals. Continuing out from those

building-centric ministries were themes around pastoral care of the congregation and community as well as broader community engagement. All of these themes were then tied together under ideas around revealing God, embodying Jesus, or drawing people to faith.

The theme of presence as a ministry of the church appeared firstly with respect to the building itself. One priest highlighted it as "the focal point of the community." Another priest, while not holding this as their own view, related how many desire and perceive it as the "picture postcard backdrop of the village life." Not only does it have this sort of geographical or aesthetic function, but it also functions as the expectable venue for regular worship services and occasional offices. One priest described their congregation's attitude as "keeping the show on the road" which was "partly to do with the building and partly to do with sustaining worship." All mentioned the desirability of the building for occasional offices, while each of them also indicated a desire to bring opportunities for public worship or other services out of the building and into other common spaces.

This also feeds into the theme of pastoral care and community engagement. Each priest made mention of the ministry of the church with respect to caring for the congregation at times of need. But that extended to the desire to care for community members in the same way, whether that be times of bereavement, economic hardship, loneliness, or whatever else. But such engagement is not only for care in times of crisis; it is also proactive engagement in the goings on of the community such as fetes, schools, cafés, and the like.

For each of these priests, however, these ministries were not ends to themselves, and each priest had both similar and slightly different ways of describing it. One priest described their hope of "giving a good image of God" in their community and that it would "ultimately, bring people to faith." Interestingly when discussing this, this priest also connected themselves rather specifically to this ministry of the church saying they hoped others might have been able to "[see] God through me." Another described their desire that the Church be "an embodiment of Jesus." They also articulated their hope that people in their congregation and community would be "swept up by the Spirit." Another priest borrowed from another nationally recognized Anglican priest in desiring the church to be a "blessing machine." Each in their own way described the ministry of the church as presence not simply for its own sake but to result in some revelation of God in Jesus to the net benefit of the community.

Congregational Laity Responses

Similar themes emerged among the congregational laity responses. Each of the interviewees identified the building's existence with reference to the ministry of the church. They also carried on with themes of regular worship services, occasional offices, pastoral care, and community engagement. They deviated from the majority of the priests as each of them, in different ways, identified the ministry of the church with the activities of the parish priest. The other theme that emerged was the diversity or apparent lack of understanding of what the ministry of the church categorically is or how it is fulfilled.

Participants were asked about their perception of how the community understood the ministry of the church. One participant reasoned it was "probably very personalized" before considering that "a lot of people don't know [and] don't actually care." Another

assessed that, aside from the building being in good repair, the church and its ministry was "irrelevant" and "not in touch." Within the congregation the situation was not much clearer. One replied that "all sorts of answers" would be given from the community. Another reckoned that it was not "really understood at all" in the congregation before confessing themselves, "I'm never quite sure what that means." Regarding both the community and the congregation another participant figured, "different people have different requirements." And continued, "People provide what anybody requires, so [the priest] has different strands of the ministry." Even with respect to what they thought their parish priests over time have thought the ministry of the church was, one participant simply said, "Broad. Very broad."

The final quotes above illustrate the connection of the ministry of the church to the parish priest. Another interviewee when asked about the ministry of the church immediately went on to describe the activities of their priest. Another participant replied similarly. When asked about the ministry of the Church, they went on to comment on those activities that their priest was gifted and skilled at. To round out the whole group of laity, a fourth interviewee immediately commented on the spiritual leadership of the priest with respect to the ministry of the church.

Some ministries of the church were more positively identifiable. As mentioned in the opening paragraph of this section, these were to do with the building, occasional offices, worship services, pastoral care, and community engagement. The diversity, uncertainty and ambiguity above only partly worked its way through these. The building and the occasional offices were statically understood. However, there was a good deal of diversity around services, pastoral care, and community engagement. Services ranged

from a very strict expectation of a *Book of Common Prayer* service to animal blessing services, carol services on the green, Messy Church styled all-age services, and other Fresh Expressions. Community engagement ranged from cafés and ploughman's lunches to Christmas parties and pancake parties to engagement with local charities and community groups or schools. Pastoral care ranged from being actively aware of and pursuant of those in need whether physically, emotionally, or economically to being relatively passively present and available should anyone decide that they would like some support.

Community Member Responses

None of the community member participants identified any kind of relationship with or to Jesus. Neither did they identify as "churchgoers" though any of them might decide to attend an occasional service here or there, particularly a baptism, wedding, funeral, or festival like Christmas Eve. Typical themes continued to emerge. For these participants, the ministry of the church was related first to the building. Then from the building it was to provide appropriate worship space for its' religious adherents, sacred space for the community, and to more broadly engage with and for the community. Also, there continued to be a connection of the ministry of the church to the person of the priest.

When asked about the role of the church in the community, the first participant called it, "Very important. Extremely important." They carried on with reference to the building to describe it as, "the centerpiece of the village" and continued, "Our village, without a church, is not really a village." Another participant described it architecturally

as "the focal point of the village." And, again, the third interviewee described it as, "the centerpiece for the community."

However, this centerpiece is not simply aesthetic or functional. When asked, interviewees indicated that the village hall would not be able to occupy that same space as the parish church. The church is somehow or another a different sort of space. One participant described it more functionally with regards to the necessary sort of space for religious Christians to worship and indicated that it would also be a suitable space for any other person to go to sit and contemplate in a way that the village hall just would not do for. Another indicated that it was precisely because Christians regularly worship there that the building has the aura or effect that it has in the community. Participants were asked if it would be okay with them if the church building remained but was turned over to an organization like the English Heritage Trust and was kept as is and in good condition to be open for contemplation, etc. Each participant regarded that as "sad" or otherwise insufficient, particularly for those who may be experiencing some kind of personal or collective trauma.

There was also an element of culture and community coherence that the church provided according to these participants. The parish church gave identity to the *English* village. One participant relayed how, if they had international visitors, they would want to take them to the church as a relevant site for experiencing or understanding English culture. Another mentioned the historical and cultural features engraved in and on walls, floors, and windows. Even though these cultural or aesthetic functions of the church still loom large for these participants, there is still an inescapable way in which the spiritual

charge of the place by virtue of its regular use for worship is not excluded from view, even for those who have no faith.

Research Question #2: Among the clergy, congregational laity, and community members of these rural parishes, what expectations of the ministry of the Church are placed upon priests and the laity? Description of Evidence

This section will be treated in two parts. The first part will address participants' expectations of priestly ministry. The second part will cover the participants' expectation of lay ministry. Among the expectations of priestly ministry certain themes emerge. One major them is that of the presence of the priest. However, there was also a variety of understandings and expectation of and beyond that. Among these were highlighted the differences between being a priest and being a vicar. The former being the 'sort of person' a person is and the latter being a job that they might do. There were also further ambiguities and diversity of expectation beyond that. Other expectations around leadership, shepherding, and pastoral care.

Expectations of lay ministry continued to exhibit variety in their particulars. However, there were some common general themes as well. One common theme was being 'with' the priest/vicar. Some understood that 'being with' in terms of helping the vicar with all the various things that need doing. Some of that 'being with' was to do with sharing with the priest/vicar in the worshipping life, mission, and ministry of the church. Yet others, mainly priests, expressed an expectation that the laity would be 'with' the priest in a more profound way of shared following of Jesus. Another theme that emerged from community members was simply that the laity would act in the community that is

consistent with the values that Christian faith espouses and that the laity would be faithful in preserving the church in the village.

Expectations of Priestly Ministry

Parish Priest Responses

Across the Priestly responses two different strands emerged related to the expectations they identified in their ministries. One strand related to their job as a vicar, the other related to their identity as a priest. These two strands occasionally overlap but are not necessarily as intertwined as might be thought.

Related to being a vicar, each participant identified various responsibilities of the job. They all mentioned the administrative tasks that are part of the role. They also mentioned the various ministerial activities that they might get involved in regarding things like pastoral care, visitation, leading worship, and other community engagements. However, none of these were necessarily unable to be delegated. Conversely, one priest noted those things that probably should be someone else's responsibility, but there is no one else to do it, so they pick it up.

As it related to their priesthood, other themes emerged with some commonality and some difference. All participants dialed in on the sacramental aspect of their priestly ministry and occasional offices. However, there was some difference as to their attitudes about different services. One identified feeling "most priestly" when dealing with funerals and funeral families, even though that is one of the occasional offices that can be handled by trained and licensed laity. Equally, they disliked doing weddings and did not feel particularly priestly doing that which is not able to be delegated to laity. Another mentioned an experience of priestliness when leading a service and seeking to discern if

and how the Spirit might be moving. Again, this is not necessarily something that is confined to the priesthood, and the laity are more than welcome to participate in.

Each also highlighted their broader role in the community. One priest identified such a role as "undefined," "simply ambiguous," and something "no one is quite sure of." They did, however, concede that it was "figurehead…-ish." Another priest echoed the sentiment describing how their priesthood gave them an audience or credibility in their community that there would not appear to be any other reason for them having. This ambiguous role manifests itself in involvements in local charities, being the pub quiz quizmaster, judging a fancy dress competition, and more.

The three themes that all participants discussed were to do with presence, shepherding, and representing God. With different language, each participant identified something around bringing people together. For one priest that looked more familial in keeping people together, "sharing the love." Another priest discussed it more in the sense of enrolling everyone into the broader mission and vision of the church. Another priest identified the incorporation of members of the community into the life of the church and the life of the church into the goings of the community.

That possibility of bringing people together is contingent upon being present. Presence matters significantly. One priest observed, "You're noticed. You're noticed when you're there. You're noticed when you're not there." The priests communicated an expectation that they would be around and available. Some of that is a mundane security that is actually quite profound. One priest remarked with wonder, "I'm representing God for goodness sake, you know?" Another priest, more influenced by a presbyterial form of priesthood, remarked their growing appreciation that irrespective of what they think they

still represent Christ and his presence in the community. They carried on, "the symbolic value [of the clerical collar] is never completely lost." Two priests also highlighted the significance of that in times of great trauma. One of them articulated that because of the clerical collar it is indicated that, "God's here through this person," and profound comfort may be found. For these priests, presence is not simply a functional requirement toward their diverse activities, but it is a sacred mediation of the presence or representation of God.

Congregational Laity Responses

Responses from the laity in the congregation begin to reveal a diversity of expectation of priestly ministry. Often, there was less of an overall idea or expectation of "priestly ministry" *per se* as there was an identification of the kinds of activities their parish priest engaged in. In one sense, there are common themes around service leading, occasional offices, community engagement and pastoral care. However, some differences around emphasis or delegation began to emerge. Also, there were differences in understanding about what sort of public worship services ought to be provided and what pastoral care means. However, a consistent theme across the interviews was that the priest was not expected to do it all themselves. Effective use of the laity by the priest was a clear expectation. Lastly, the diversity of expectation of priestly ministry from the various stakeholders, not only in the community or congregation, but from the diocese or national church was notice.

Spiritual leadership was an expectation that emerged. While this overall idea was present across participants in this group, what it meant to each of them was slightly different. Three of the four identified planning, leading, and/or preaching at services as

within that remit. However, across all four, this is all able to be delegated to appropriate members of the laity. Even presiding at Holy Communion or Communion by Extension would be accepted from the laity according to two participants. Nevertheless, certain occasional offices or liturgical festivals were identified by one participant as appropriately the remit of the priest alone.

These participants also diverged in emphasis on spiritual leadership. For one participant such leadership was reflective of authority. To them, the parish priest was "the ultimate decider" and had "the final say." To another, spiritual leadership was to do with being "good at spirituality." Presence and leadership at "major church services" was another way a participant described their expectation of priestly ministry, indicating a leadership expectation that included a representative quality that lends gravitas. The last participant identified vision, strategy, and delegation as key functions of the spiritual leadership of the parish priest.

While each participant also described pastoral care as an expectation of priestly ministry, they also all had a slightly different ideas of what that meant and some acknowledged the diversity of others' expectations of pastoral care from the priest. One participant was very clear about pastoral care in the sense of visiting the "sick, bereaved, hospitalized" and other home-bound parishioners. But there was also the expectation that the priest was "around" and "available" in the community for those who might want or need pastoral care but would not necessarily actively pursue it. That meant being in the pub, out and about in the community, and otherwise present in an unbusy way.

Another participant elaborated on the theme of pastoral care slightly differently. They did not speak about the priest being in other people's homes in visitation as much as

they spoke about opening up the vicarage/rectory and regularly practicing hospitality in that way. They also discussed presence in the community. They were less expectant of the priest being passively around for those who might wish to have a conversation with them. It was more about being present at community events and church ministries/services led by the laity in a supportive and encouraging role. There was a theme of vulnerability associated with these expectations: vulnerability to welcome people into their home and vulnerability to need others to engage in the work of the ministry and to wish them to do it well. This participant imagined the thoughts of the priest, "It's like, 'I need you, I, I can't... I'm just the, the [priest]. I just need, I need you guys to, to pitch in, to do a thing.'"

A similar vulnerability of the priest was articulated by another participant considering pastoral care among some of the other expectations of priestly ministry. In considering the need of the priest to be whoever and whatever others might need or expect them to be they reflected, "It's the hardest job in the world." They further considered the personal differences in the different priests they have experienced in their parish and the finitude of each of them. They concluded that each priest is "necessarily limited" in their ability to deliver the diversity of pastoral care that might be expected or required in their parish. While another participant reckoned, "[Priests] provide what anybody requires," this expectation might not be broadly considered achievable.

Each participant communicated an expectation of priestly ministry in terms of presence in the community. This presence was described in terms of general presence around and about the village. It was also described in terms of presence at community events of various descriptions. But only two participants made reference to any kind of

mediative or representative role of the priest. Whether community events, pastoral care or whatever, one participant identified the priest in these contexts as "Christ's representative." Another relayed an expectation that priestly presence has "a sense of bringing God to people."

Lastly, each participant also had comments regarding the priest navigating the demands of being a priest and also a vicar in a diocese of the Church of England. On the one hand are the priestly ministerial needs and expectations of the community. On the other are the organizational demands of the diocese or national church. One participant related that to policies and procedures that may or may not fit their context. Another mentioned theological and structural challenges. Two others were more interested in their perception of allocation of priestly resources to rural contexts. Each found those strictures to be problematic for what they expect of priestly ministry in their context and the organizational capacity for and demands of a vicar or rector.

Community Member Responses

The most significant theme to emerge from community participants was that of presence. Relatedly, a theme of leadership was consistent across three strands: community, organizational, and spiritual. A theme of representation also was present; however, it was more to do with representation of the church rather than God or Jesus Christ. Lastly, pastoral care featured but with less specificity. It was more about the availability of pastoral care.

Presence was the main expectation for these participants. One participant highlighted this describing a priest who was "in the middle of things" and "not at all remote." They would be out running, cycling, walking the dogs, or otherwise there in the

community. They described someone who would be "one of us" and "just a good mate to everybody." Another participant described it as being "naturally a part of the community" and moved about the community "as if they belong." They went on to elaborate on the nature of that presence with descriptors like "benign," "gentle, calm and reassuring," and "great comfort." This participant also expected that such presence was not simply generically public but was also specific in visitation, pastoral care, and compassion. One of the participants took the meaning or function of that presence a step further. They saw such presence of giving the community coherence "knitting the whole thing together." They further offered, "In any community there needs to be a center. A center physically, as a church [building]… I think that it [also] needs a center in a way of a person." For this person, the Church of England priest is central to community coherence and identity.

This relates to this group's understanding of the ministry of the church with respect to English culture mentioned previously. One participant indicated an expectation of the parish priest to represent not only the church, but also the kind of Christian values that form British values. Another participant indicated the importance and distinction of these cultural values in distinction of other competing values in a pluralistic society whereby communities might maintain their coherence and the parish priest's central role in this.

In order to fulfil these expectations another expectation was present. Leadership was deemed equally important. This leadership was described as requiring a certain level of competence. One participant indicated the expectation of competence related to leading worship services or occasional offices. They identified the need to be "perhaps a natural orator." Another identified the need of leadership within the church in terms of the

need to "educate" or "persuade" the congregation of that which was necessary to keep the church going in the parish. This relates to organizational leadership which one participant highlighted with respect to change management and administrative competence either in the church itself or in various charities or community organizations.

One participant also made a point of relative emotional intelligence as an expectation of someone who was meant to be a community leader. They positively described an occasion where the priest was "fantastically entertaining to be with" and "naturally a part of the community." They also described that emotional intelligence with respect to spiritual guidance and pastoral care that was kind and benevolent rather than harsh or confrontational. In elaborating, they drew comparison with an aid worker.

Expectations of Lay Ministry

Parish Priest Responses

Underpinning any expectations of lay ministry, the priestly participants described an *a priori* expectation of the laity more generally. This expectation was not explicitly or succinctly stated' it was described. It is an expectation that the laity would be with them. In one sense that presence is similar to that expected of the priests in terms of presence and availability. One priestly participant described this kind of presence expected of the laity as, "turning up at PCC, helping in community events, church events [and services]… if [they] tithe [and] help do teas and coffees, that ticks a really nice box in terms of faith, relationship, discipleship, [and] spiritual growth." This reflected the expectation of presence related to the church. Another priest reflected the presence of their laity in the community in a double-edged way. They loved their laity's presence in

the community but were concerned that they were so infiltrated in the community that "perhaps we're not distinctive."

These priests also described a kind of presence they longed for and expected as a deeper sense of being with them. One priest described a time when their churchwarden was not just 'present' but was really 'with them' in ministry. It was just before a funeral that was expected to be quite difficult for various reasons. The churchwarden stopped this priest just a bit before the funeral, acknowledged how difficult it was likely to be, and prayed for the priest they went out to lead the service. Another priest described wanting their congregational laity to be "on their knees [in] surrender… swept up by the Holy Spirit… little pockets of fire [in the community], of the Holy Spirit and grace." What these priests were describing was an expectation that their laity would first be with them in faith and following Jesus, *then* with them in worship, mission, and ministry.

The ministry that these priests expect their laity to engage in is all of it. One word that was used often was "help": help with services, help with community engagement, help with pastoral care, help with administration. The other word that was used as often or was otherwise being described was "sharing": shared planning and execution of services or programs or sharing "the load." It was not simply about delegating tasks or filling rotas or officer roles, but being united in the vision, mission, and strategies of the life and ministry of the Church, borne out of the sharing of faith and discipleship.

One participant reflected, that what they ultimately desired of lay ministry was "a collegiate vision" where the clergy, churchwardens, lay readers, and PCC work together like a ministry team. They expect "a sort of active engagement in the agreed ministry of the church." This is juxtaposed to this participant's experience. They relayed, "I've been

amazed that most of what I would take for granted as good priestly practice has been quite often questioned." This really gets to the heart of this research itself.

Congregational Laity Responses

The responses of the congregational laity had certain consistencies and a few differences. Aside from representing God, Jesus Christ, or the Church, any functional expectations of the priestly ministry and the priest's activities were also expectations of lay ministry and the activities of the laity. However, a difference was also noticed between lay and ordained in qualitative respects. Priests did not have to be better than the laity at everything, but there was something different about them. There was also a split between these participants. Two of them were more focused on helping or supporting the priest or the ministry of the church. Two others were more focused on sharing with the priest in the mission and ministry of the church.

One participant was quite concise in their expectation of lay ministry. It was almost exclusively to do with material support, financially or practically, of the ministry of the church. Such ministry was understood in terms of buildings, services, and community engagement. There was little limitation regarding what they might accept as appropriate to the laity—even presiding at Holy Communion or Communion by Extension. Another participant similarly described lay ministry in terms of helping lead and preach at services as well as serving teas and coffees and stepping up into officer roles like churchwarden or treasurer. They ultimately described it as being "there and available for whatever is necessary." But they also highlighted the relative 'otherness' of the clergy considering that, "a priest probably isn't removed, but is sometimes seen as removed. The [clerical] collar is there." The laity, as "ordinary people", are a bit more

accessible to others, serving as "a bridge." They also highlighted their view that Licensed Lay Ministers particularly, are there to "keep the ordained in touch."

The two other participants responded similarly with reference to the activities and ministries that the laity would be expected to be involved in. They both highlighted things like worship leading, preaching, singing in the choir, community engagement, outreach and taking on official roles. But they went further than the previous two. They both highlighted navigating the organizational and other expectations from the diocese or national church. Both also elaborated on the laity's role in identifying needs in the community and participating in the overall identification and execution of mission, vision, and strategies of the ministry of the church.

Both also agreed with the previous participant with respect to the relative freedom the laity enjoy compared to the parish priest. One described the potential intimidation that some might experience with respect to the parish priest. They considered the freedom that the laity enjoy without the weight of such intimidation. They both also noted the freedom from organizational limitations that the priest might experience.

Both also noted the supportive role of the laity with respect to the priest and the ministry of the church. It had been noted that they had an expectation of the priest's vulnerability and the need to step up and get stuck in to support the priest. The other identified a similar practical support in the planning and execution of programs and services in the worshipping life, mission, and ministry of the church. But they also noted the personal support of the priest and other leading laity as well.

However, in being 'with' the priest as described above also means joining in some of the ambiguity of expectation around what "ministry" is. This participant wondered

about "lay ministry", "What does that mean? If you're standing at the bar in the pub, are you there to promote? To share? To listen?" In a certain sense that ambiguity was communicated as frustrating. In another sense, it is entering into the vexation of the ambiguity that the priest might also experience. In that way, this participant described a sort of solidarity with the priest, even if that was not an active expectation.

Community Member Responses

All three participants from the community had a shared expectation of the laity and lay ministry in one respect. That was principally to perpetuate the existence of the church in the community. Two participants were mostly interested in the congregational laity being involved in and supportive of local charities which exist to support the material care of the parish church building, attending fundraising events, and the sort. One of them carried on further. They expected the laity to be faithful in going to church. They also expected the laity to be insistent upon their children participating in and carrying on in the life of the church, materially supporting it, and being involved in those activities or organizations which do the same.

The third participant went a bit further. Their expectation of the laity mirrored their expectations of the priest. They expected the laity to be present in the community in a beneficent and benign way. They expected the laity to live out the faith they profess. They explained, "I expect those who claim Christianity [and] espouse the values, to actually live the values and therefore, take time to play a role in the community to help others… If you believe in the teachings of God, then live them." They carried on citing examples of Christians they knew who were actively present and involved in their communities in ways that made practical and tangible differences.

They further went on to contrast these examples with other negative examples of the laity out in the community and the world. They elaborated on experiences in the workplace and elsewhere when a Christian was tactless or confrontational in their presentation of the Christian faith. They also cited the lack of humility they often experienced from Christians. They reckoned that the kind of confidence these Christians had with respect to being right about their faith bled into other areas of life as well in a way that was dismissive of others' thoughts or views, even on matters that were not faith related.

Across these three, the expectation of the laity was to take their faith seriously in a committed way. It was to engage meaningfully in the community, particularly with partners working to support the Church and with those in the community who are particularly vulnerable or in need. Ultimately, it is to live out their faith in a way that is observably consistent.

Summary

Expectations of priestly ministry across participants are regularly tied to the building, regular worship services, occasional offices, pastoral care, and community engagement. There are additional elements of spiritual and community leadership present among these expectations as well. However, how exactly these expectations are further expected to be met is variable, sometimes ambiguous, and difficult to identify. Similarly, expectations of lay ministry had certain consistent themes related to their participation in the life of the church and its ministry. However, that participation had varying levels or degrees to it. For some, that participation is simply showing up, financially supporting the church, just "keeping the show on the road," and consistently living their Christian values

out in the community. For others, that participation was expected to include practical help with the goings on of the church or even a deeper sharing in the worshipping life, mission, and ministry of the church. Yet further was an expectation to really be with the parish priest in faith in Jesus and carrying out Jesus' mission in the world.

Research Question #3: Among the clergy, congregational laity, and community members of these rural parishes, how flexible are those expectations?

Description of Evidence

In many respects, discovering how flexible these expectations are was quite difficult to elucidate. More evident was the degree to which expectations were broadly held or perceived, and consistent across the participants or over time, or not. Also, evidence of flexibility of expectation was perhaps less evident than the ability to accept, or not, situations where expectations and reality deviated.

Parish Priest Responses

In considering the flexibility of expectations of lay and priestly ministry several themes emerged. One theme was related to the diversity of expectations across and within Parishes. Secondly, there was variability around flexibility and rigidity of expectation. Lastly, there appeared to be evidence around what helped or hindered such flexibility. Each of the priests who participated were a part of some kind of amalgamation and therefore also have at least two parishes to compare from in their own experiences.

The diversity of characteristics and expectations across parishes was keenly noticed. One participant described their two parishes as "wildly different." They further elaborated from their past rural ministry experiences, "Every rural community is actually different and has a different self-awareness." Another priest reflected on the different

levels of flexibility they have encountered in two of their parishes. One is very fixed and the other very flexible. The other priest noted the diversity within one of their parishes, not just across them. They noted the presence of the Lord and Lady of the Manor, the middle-class London commuters, the retirees, and the active farmers. Across that diversity within the parish comes a diversity of expectation and a diversity of flexibility regarding that expectation. Yet further to some people's expectations being more rigid was the reality that some people's expectations were more consequential than others. The priest might end up providing a certain type of ministry in order to suit that one person who might not even show up for it.

The second theme that emerged was around the variability of flexibility. For instance, one priest relayed the very rigid expectation from one consequential parishioner that there be a *BCP* Holy Communion Service. However, there was great flexibility with respect to the fact that they were not particularly fussed about whether it was an actual priest there presiding. Another priest described the strong characters in their parish with strong opinions and fixed expectations. Nevertheless, they also described how the parish has been quite fluid over time. Previous priests were more or less contemporary-evangelical or traditional and brought the church along those transitions. Somehow, those strong characters with strong opinions who had been in the parish a long time were able to come along for those changes.

The final priest revealed their own flexibility and rigidity. They were very flexible on forms saying, "I'm really open and flexible… If that's choral tradition, that's choral tradition. If that's Messy Church, it's Messy Church. If that's speaking in tongues, that's speaking in tongues." What they were fixed about was spiritual encounter. Choral

tradition, Messy Church, and speaking in tongues represented the variety of ways in which that spiritual encounter might be achieved. It is the encounter that mattered for this priest. The variability of flexibility extends through the priests, through the congregations, and throughout the communities.

The final theme from these priests related to the flexibility of expectation was related to what facilitated flexibility. The parish that migrated across contemporary-evangelical or traditional churchmanships did so because of the priest at the time and the priest's presence in that village. The other parish in the amalgamation did not have the priest there as frequently and had been more static in expectation. Similarly, the village where one person is demanding of a *BCP* service that they do not even turn up to is also the village where the priest does not live. Finally, one priest cogently described the legacy in two of their parishes. Their predecessor was almost entirely absent from one of them and lived in the other. The parish where the priest lived is the parish that is most flexible, and the other is very rigid. The previously noted theme around presence continued to loom large.

Congregational Laity Responses

It was among the congregational laity responses that the variability of flexibility was most apparent. One participant plainly noted, "I think different people have different requirements." And with respect to the Parish Priest categorically, "People provide what anybody requires, so [they have] different strands of the ministry. Among the [Parish] records are notes which previous rectors have written… there is a pretty broad church." Throughout time in their Parish there has been notable variability in what the ministry of the Church looked like and what the expectations of lay and priestly ministry were.

Another participant responded similarly. While they identified themselves as quite traditional, it was a previous priest who was fairly contemporary in style that they cited as an example of someone whose priestly ministry met or exceeded expectations. It was their presence, spirituality, and pastoral care that made the difference. It is unclear as to whether this speaks to flexibility of expectation or resilience when expectation is not met. However, this and the above evidence suggest that there is either a variability or flexibility of expectation over time, flexibility in real time, a resilience to unmet expectations, or some combination of the above. That resilience could be resultant of the actual presence of the parish priest as suggested earlier. It could also be resultant of some other expectations being met, creating a suitable balance or ratio of satisfaction with met and unmet expectations.

One participant had interesting insight related to the flexibility of expectation over time. Drawing on their studies in systemic therapy, this participant saw expectations as rooted in social history and was curious if the variety of expectations could be tracked to different generations or shared experiences in different periods of time. Their sense was that there is generally a low level of flexibility in real time, but over time greater flexibility can be found.

The final participant revealed the similar sort of variable flexibility that has been noticed throughout. Just as some are very rigid about something like the *BCP* but less rigid about who might preside, this participant was inversely flexible. They were very flexible against the constraints of Church of England structures, inherited forms, and traditional expectations. But they were very fixed in their expectations related to the missional purposes of the church and the need to deploy flexibility to conform an

understanding of the ministry of the church and that of the priests and laity to that quite rigid expectation.

Community Member Responses

The first and second participants from this group were both fairly fixed in their expectations. To each of them, the ministry of the church is to bring coherence and validity to the village by virtue of its existence and status as "the center piece." That existence is realized by the presence of the building and the presence of the priest. The priest's role is to be present in the community, to provide for the spiritual needs of the congregation and any others who might desire it, and to be persuasive with the congregation and cooperative with the community to keep the whole thing going. The role of the laity is to actively participate in the life of the church, passing on that habit to their children, to follow the priest's instructions, and to join in with the community, especially the "Friends of" charity to keep the whole thing going. That way, the community retains its center piece, its identity is validated, and some coherence of the community is supported. It is a narrow, fixed, and clear understanding and expectation.

The final participant presented some flexible expectations and some less flexible expectations. For instance, as previously noted, this participant maintains a certain regard for the building and its' sanctity or reverence because of the meaningful spiritual activity that regularly takes place in it. They also had expressed some concern over keen vicars that go into a context and wish to change everything, disregarding the "oldies" who had faithfully been there up to that point. While considering the need to attract younger people and families, they also articulated some kind of flexibility to try and navigate or negotiate the variety of expectations or desires regarding the ministry of the church.

However, they also expressed some rather fixed expectations. They communicated expectations around the overall benign nature and presence of the priest. This expectation carried on to the laity as well. There was consistent expectation that any Christian would both espouse and live out certain Christian values, particularly looking out for one's neighbor or those in need. Furthermore, they had communicated expectations around accessibility, provision of spiritual nurture, and care for those who desire it. Across the last few parish priests they've experienced, they evaluated them based on those expectations.

Summary of Major Findings

Throughout the interviews and across participants there were some consistencies as well as differences. Certain items or topics consistently arose, giving frame to the variety of understandings around the ministry of the church and the expectations of lay and priestly ministry. The existence of the church building and its use for regular Christian worship and occasional offices like baptisms, weddings, and funerals was always in view. But there was variety in understanding or expectation of what those services might look like and what else the building could be used for. Pastoral care of the congregation and community was always mentioned though there was difference around what that looked like and how active or passive it was. Equally, community engagement was always identified, but again, there was difference as to how active or passive that engagement was, as well as how distinctively Christian it should be. In addition to these, there was a consistent mention of diversity across and within parishes both presently and over time, indicating a either a flexibility of expectation, resilience to unmet expectations, and sometimes a lack thereof. Throughout these, four major themes emerged.

The first major finding is that there is variety. Each of the rural Parishes has a particular distinctiveness to it, as do the ministries of the Parish Church and their congregations. Some of that variety may be to do with how ancient or Victorian the parish church or ministry is. Some of that may be to do with whether there is historical land ownership and where the Lord or Lady lived or continues to live, where the village was, and where the laborers for the land lived. Some of that is due to the sort of parish priests that have ministered in those parishes and for how long. Yet further the current population and demographics of the parish impact the variety that may be found there. While there may be some similarity or cross-over in character or features of the parish, there is a lack of uniformity among the rural parishes of the Dorking deanery. There is also variety within these parishes. Wealthy landowners, farmers, middle-class London commuters, retirees, and working-class laborers all live in these parishes with diverse housing and subcultures. The variety within and across parishes results in a variety of understanding and expectation across and within these parishes.

The second major finding is that there is variability. Within the variety of expectations, there is also variability in which expectations are more or less consequential than others. Some unmet expectations are perfectly satisfactory so long as other expectations are met. Other times it does not matter how many expectations are met, if one expectation in particular is not met, or if some person in particular has an unmet expectation, there is a problem. It is something like a sound desk. There are certain sliders that must exist: the building, services, occasional offices, pastoral care, community engagement, and what the priest or the laity are involved in or responsible for. But there is great variability in how high or low each of those sliders might be

positioned as well as how the gain or EQ knobs above them are tuned to find the right mix. There is variability to the 'right mix' across and within Parishes in all their variety.

The third major finding is that there is a possibility of resilience within these parishes with respect to unmet expectations. With all of the variety and variability, it is impossible to meet all of the expectations that are had. The vicar is not expected to do it all. The laity are expected to be stuck in and meaningfully engaged. But the variety and variability of what that materially means in the everyday goings on of parish ministry is real. This also means that the frustration or conflict resultant of unmet expectation is real. Nevertheless, there was evidence that different parish priests did things different ways at different times and different communities and congregations interacted with that differently. Some with a great deal of resilience and acceptance of unmet expectations. Others with less resilience. What appears to be the determining factor is the fourth major finding.

In a word, the fourth major theme, and the most significant theme is presence. Across the variety and variability within and across these parishes, incoherence to the community is always a threat. The presence of the church gives a coherence to the community that the village hall, pub, or post office cannot. But the building cannot do this on its own. It needs a people. The presence of real live worshipping people on regular occasions is necessary. That people and that community need the presence of a person who leads, represents, and cares for those people and the community at large. That person is the priest. When a priest is present, 'the mix' within the variety and variability can be finetuned. Resilience and flexibility are possible.

It is not just the building or the priest that must be present. As mentioned above, the laity must be present as well. The community participants and half of the laity participants understood this presence quite materially. The presence was related to attendance on Sundays, serving as an officer like a treasurer, churchwarden or PCC member, practically helping serve hot drinks and biscuits, or singing in the choir. Half of the laity and all the Priests described that presence in a deeper way. It was to do with sharing in the worshipping life, mission, and ministry of the church, not just helping it. Moreover, it was about the laity having a vibrant life of faith in Jesus that was shared with their priest and fueled the real reason for the church's presence in the community—not just to give it cohesion, but to connect people with God. The presence, to them, is about embodying Jesus so that their communities would be drawn to faith. Furthermore, that presence of the laity is not simply presence at the church, or even a deeper presence with the priest in sharing the work of the ministry, it requires the laity to be meaningfully present in the community, distinctly as Christians.

Lastly, carrying on the theme of presence is an expectation of the priests and the laity on the members of the community. Any expectation of the community is outside the immediate view of this research but is an interesting development within it. The community must also be present. The church cannot continue to exist, give coherence to the community, or carry on supplying a priest and providing services and occasional offices without the community's real presence with the church beyond the occasional offices or occasional community event.

1. Variety – Each Parish is different and there is a variety of expectation within each Parish.
2. Variability – Within the variety, the expectations held within them are various but also variable. They are not necessarily static or non-negotiable.
3. Resilience – It is possible for expectations to be adjusted or negotiated, but it is also possible to have resilience regarding unmet expectations.
4. Presence – Presence is the underpinning expectation behind all other expectations. It is the factor that makes negotiating variety and variability possible, as well as securing resilience.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

In this chapter the major findings described in chapter four will be reviewed against the historical, biblical, theological backgrounds discussed in the literature review in chapter two. Interestingly, most of the major findings are not necessarily directly connected to biblical, theological, or historical ideas around the priesthood or laity. There was little to no direct theological, biblical, or historical rationale cited by any of the participants directly connecting their expectations of priestly or lay ministry to any of these foundations. Nevertheless, there was a certain congruence between the variety, variability, and resilience of certain ideas around the priesthood and laity in the biblical, historical, and theological foundations in the literature review that is reflected in in the major findings. The fourth major finding of presence is where there is the clearest connection between the literature review and the major findings from the research.

Major Findings

First Finding: Variety

Prior to the research my observation was that there was a fairly fixed and Victorian expectation of lay and priestly ministry across and within these parishes that would have been in keeping with the myth of rural England. I perceived that the congregations and communities expected a parish priest in the form of George Herbert's *Country Parson* but with a vestigial sacramental edge. I thought that across and within these parishes there was the desire for a benign and present priest to be wandering about the village, having tea with various parishioners in their homes, and performing 'priestly

duties' such as morning and evening prayer, conducting services and occasional offices, alongside efforts to keep the building in good repair so that the village's postcard picture quality may be retained. The laity's role was simply to attend services, volunteer as necessary, and financially support these efforts. Essentially, the church and the priest were luxury items for middle class Surrey dwellers attempting to realize the myth of rural England for themselves.

During and after the research, I found that what I previously thought was not entirely true. Neither was it entirely false. As interviews were conducted, the value of the building and the availability of services and occasional offices as well as benign priestly presence in the parish all featured. However, it was not as shallow and self-indulgent as I had previously imagined. Nor was it as monolithic. During the interviews, it became clear that across and within the different parishes, real differences were present. These differences were concurrent with different expectations of the church, the priest and the laity.

These findings are more contextual than they are supported by specific findings from the literature review. But there is a consistency between them. As discussed in the historical foundations in chapter two, there are nearly two thousand years of Christian history in the patch of island now called England. Celtic/Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Reformed/Protestant/Evangelical, and Charismatic expectations of lay and priestly ministry have variously competed and coalesced within and across the Church of England and its parishes. Quintessential to the Church of England's identity are the Elizabethan compromises where pragmatic and workable compromises papered over deep theological difference.

This papering over deep difference and variety is also manifested linguistically in the very word "priest." As discussed previously the one English word "priest" is used to translate the Greek words ἱερεύς and πρεσβύτερος as well as the Latin word *sacerdos*. While s*acerdos* and ἱερεύς both refer to sacrifice making and mediating religious figures, πρεσβύτερος refers to an elder with respect to one who has leadership in the community. The one English word "priest" gives reference to all of this range of meaning with little specificity to which it or its user means to give reference to, when or why.

In this way, the variety of understandings and expectations of the church and both priestly and lay ministry is, at times, disconnected from the clarity of the Scriptures. When one reads the English word "priest" in the text of Scripture, who or what does that give contemporary reference to in the mind of the reader? What expectation does that elicit and of whom? The English word "priest" is derived specifically from πρεσβύτερος. if the Bible reader encounters the word "presbyter" or "elder" in its place, what expectations are not elicited of the priest? When no one in the Church of England system is called "elder" or "presbyter" except in the title of a liturgical form of ordaining priests, what expectations are unable to be Scripturally formed or shared? Even the conflation of the identity of being a priest and the job role of being a vicar are so synonymous that it is difficult to distinguish what activities or responsibilities are germane to which.

The semantic ambiguity of the word "church" is also problematic. Is that word being used to refer to the building or the people who gather there for worship? Furthermore, of the people gathered, does it give reference to all of them, only the baptized or confirmed, only those with a faith that might be described as "born again", or some combination of the above? What of the national Church of England or the diocese?

Without biblical clarity, any theological or ecclesiological clarity is obscured, unmoored, and bound to be situationally determined. Such contextual determination is bound to produce or reinforce the kind of variety found in this research. Such variety provides a spacious and generous environment. However, such ambiguity also provides opportunities for confusion, miscommunication, misunderstanding, and conflict.

Second Finding: Variability

Again, prior to the research I perceived a relatively fixed expectation of lay and priestly ministry in and across the rural parishes of the Dorking deanery. However, the variety discussed previously gave way to the variability discovered through the research. There is no evidence that the participants were consciously aware of it, but their expectations of lay and priestly ministry were informed by more Celtic, Roman Catholic, Evangelical, or social-civic backgrounds. Each of them drew on the eclectic ecclesial history of Christianity on the British Isles as well as the vestiges of Christendom.

After the research, the semantic and actual ambiguity regarding the understanding of the words and actualities of "priest" and "church" were able to be identified. Some had more sacramental or pastoral expectations of the priest while others had more oversight expectations. Often there was an imprecise amalgamation of these expectations with variability around how the sacramental, pastoral, or organizational aspects were diversely weighted. Yet further, that diverse weighting could change depending on the particularities of the parish priest at the time. The variety noticed above is not a static or set variety; it is fluid and variable.

Again, the ecclesial history of the geography now called "England" is very dynamic and eclectic. The theological and ecclesiological tributaries that all feed into the

river called "The Church of England" do not necessarily blend in their shared riverbed, even if they mingle with each other. This also allows any given parochial or other situation in the Church of England to have these traditions flow around and across them and borrow their expectations as and when situationally required or desired. Or they may authentically inhabit their tradition with various other currents present there unbeknownst to them. Variability is intrinsic to the Church of England, so it may be expected in its Parishes.

It is the variety and variability of interpretation of the biblical witness that has produced the context of variety and variability in the Church of England, its parishes, and expectations therein. When this work claims a clarity of understanding about the biblical witness, it is aware that the clarity it purports is not a unique clarity but is shared by others over time as has been evidenced in the works cited and bibliography. Neither it is the only claimant to clarity. Other claimants disagree.

Nevertheless, this work has sought to demonstrate in chapter two that there is clarity in the Bible about priesthood, priestly ministry, and to whose realm it properly belongs. There is clarity that priestly ministry in the current age as it is understood by the words *sacerdos* and ἱερεύς and their sacramental and intercessory qualities is related to Jesus Christ and all of those united to him by faith. Furthermore, there is clarity that, in a Church of England context, priestly ministry as it relates to πρεσβύτερος and its pastoral, oversight, and leadership qualities is the domain of those ordained as presbyters/priests, from and among, though distinct within, the laity.

This clarity of understanding from the canon of Scripture is significantly important. The canon is a plumbline. It is a standard against which all else may be

compared with or related to in order to be understood and made true. The variability of expectation of lay and priestly ministry reveals an ignorance, misunderstanding, or lack of concern for the biblical witness related to lay and priestly ministry or a deference to the traditions cultivated through the Patristics and church traditions cultivated over the millennia. The result is a practical/pragmatic negotiation in each context related to these variable expectations and/or *a priori* ecclesiological commitments. These contextualized pragmatic negotiations may end up favoring certain stronger characters in a parish giving biased results that may or may not be beneficial to the actual mission and ministry of the Church, if left unmoored to the canon of Scripture.

Third Finding: Resilience

Before the research, I perceived very fixed and rigid expectations as described previously. Furthermore, I perceived a lack of resilience to unmet expectations which would result in disappointed parishioners refusing to engage with the church or stirring up problems for the priest. Similarly, I perceived a priest's unmet expectations as challenging their well-being. During the research, participants revealed the variability of their expectations and that these variable expectations could be negotiated. Participants could handle their unmet expectations depending upon what of their other expectations could be met and what was, in turn, expected of them. Participants were happy for services or activities that they did not care for to take place and be resources, so long as the services they desired were also available. They were flexible about who might lead various services so long as the service they expected was provided. Similarly, some participants were happy for services they did not prefer to take place so long as they were not expected to participate in or facilitate them.

One of the key factors related to flexibility of expectations or resilience in the face of unmet expectations was the presence of the parish priest. More on this will be found as the fourth finding is addressed below. However, I was surprised at the flexibility to negotiate expectations and resilience toward unmet expectations. Change in service style or churchmanship, stopping some programs and starting new initiatives, and tolerance of different priest's strengths and weaknesses were all possible with greater resilience if the priest was positively present in the parish.

There was nothing particularly supportive of this finding in the literature review. However, one could revisit the pastoral epistles with this finding in mind and appreciate this as another reason why the Apostle Paul might have commissioned Titus and Timothy to appoint presbyters across their respective areas of pastoral oversight. Additionally, one might wonder how the expectation of a sort of ubiquitous presence of the priest came about. Perhaps there is an origin story related to George Herbert's *Country Parson* and/or other sources formative of the rural English myth.

Fourth Finding: Presence

Before the research I perceived the presence of the church or the parish priest to be a middle-class luxury item in the community. Kind of like an old family heirloom sitting on a shelf, it was something nice to look at and have around just in case but had no real use and no one was willing to let go of it. Every now and again, you might take it off the shelf, dust it off, and briefly engage with it, but mostly it was just there. During the research this perception was somewhat affirmed. Each of the participants described their perception that most people in the community probably had the view of the church just described.

However, as the research continued and concluded, it became clear that for many the presence of the church and its priest was much deeper than that. It gave identity and coherence to a community that would otherwise be incoherent. The community looks to the church for that. For the community, if God exists, then God is also present by virtue of the church's presence. Similarly, if there is a God, God is embodied in the priest. For the community, having the church and its priest in the community means: if there is a God, and if I need that God, then I know where that God can be found. In its most crass evaluation, it is a bit of an insurance policy that someone else has to pay the monthly premium for. In a more optimistic or benevolent view, it is a remarkable admission of the community and opportunity for the church.

The other layers of presence have already been discussed in chapter four. The highlights are worth reiterating before discussing their relation to the literature review and biblical foundations. First, I was surprised by the difference made by the presence or absence of a priest. Unmet expectations are more easily navigated, change is more easily achieved, and congregations and communities are much more resilient and flexible when a priest is present. Secondly, the presence of the congregation really matters for the community as well as for the priest. At minimum that looks like attendance at worship and helping keep the building, services, pastoral care, and community engagement going. But it is greater than just a material presence. Especially for the priest, the presence of the laity in the sense of sharing in faith, worship, mission and ministry of the church is significant. There is a sort of mutuality and reciprocity between the priest and laity that is necessary. It can be sometimes perhaps compromised by the 'otherness' of the priest or the apathy of the laity, priest, or both. I was also surprised that the community cared

about the presence of the laity actively worshipping in the church. I would have assumed that the building being there and in good repair was the main thing. However, the building without the presence of a real worshipping community was subpar.

The various ecclesial traditions present and impacting on the Church of England have had a real consequence on this aspect of presence. The Christendom model that dominated the ecclesial landscape of England for so long has inculcated the social consciousness that a community without a church is not a community. It is lacking some basic civic/social validation. Yet further is the legacy of God's presence in and through the church and its priests. Though participants perceived most in their community as agnostic about God's existence, they are persuaded that if God does exist, the church and its priest would be a mediation of God's existence and presence in a securing and benevolent way.

The Reformed/Protestant/Evangelical tradition is present as well. The priestly participants identified that the laity have some share in their priestly ministry. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is not lost among the clergy of these parishes. They expect the laity to share in the mediating presence and activity of the church in representing God in and for the community. As well, while the notion of the otherness of the priest is not lost on the priestly participants, there is still a sense that they are among and within the laity and long for the laity to be with them and to not be removed from them.

The whole people of God being a royal priesthood is supportive of this finding. A real live church— a gathering of the people of God in a place—well and truly mediates God's presence there in a sacramental and intercessory way that blesses that place. It is

quite remarkable that community members with no faith in Jesus were able to articulate this. A desire that the ordained priest should be set apart but within the laity is similarly consistent with the presbyterial descriptions found in the biblical witness. That the presence of an ordained presbyter/priest in a place should have a beneficial and desirable effect on that place is consistent with the imperative to appoint and disperse presbyters found in the Pastoral Epistles.

Ministry Implications of the Findings

Church buildings in these rural Parishes are mission and ministry assets and, in some ways, preferable to 'neutral' sites like schools or village halls. The fundamental question beyond this research is how to use them most effectively. Also, the presence of the priest matters. It is not that lay ministry is rejected or more rejectable. It is simply that centuries of practice, messaging, and expectation has been formed among the priesthood, laity, and community alike. It is unlikely to change quickly enough. Rather, it likely needs to be leveraged effectively. But also, they are a grace. No community is owed a church, building, or priest. They are a gracious blessing of God and His presence in a place.

It is not enough just to have a building and a priest. A real live congregation meaningfully engaged in the worshipping life, mission and ministry of the church is imperative. Live and regular worship gives the building meaning and makes it effectual. Similarly, a laity that simply helps do jobs, though not irrelevant, is not the principle need of the priest from the laity. Rather their spiritual attendance and presence, sharing in the worshipping life, mission, and ministry is primary. It is out of this sort of presence that job-doing and roll-filling is most meaningful.

Just as the presence of the clergy and laity is mutual and reciprocal, so is the presence of the church and community. The community must be present to the church if the church is going to also be present to it. The presence of the church is a gift to the community. It offers the community much while costing it very little. The cost is borne by the minority in the community and/or by others outside of it. If the community will not be regularly present to the church, the church cannot be regularly present there. Jesus sent out the seventy-two disciples in Luke 10 without bag or sandals or purse and instructed them to shake of the dust and move on if there was no reception. Perhaps the parish church needs to consider leaner ways to be present and a willingness to move on if their presence is not reciprocated.

Limitations of the Study

Generalizing this study would likely be difficult. The context of rural parishes of the Dorking deanery is a very precise scope. In many respects it likely only has similarity to other rural deaneries with similar proximity to London, particularly in Surrey. There may be other opportunities for generalization for contexts that feature variety and variability, rural or not.

The context of the research is one key limitation. Another is the actual participating purposive sample group. Two of the three community member participants were from the same parish. It would have been preferable to obtain more community participants from more parishes, but there is little interest in participating in such research among them. Lastly, all of the participants were middle-aged or older, with most being over sixty years of age. Younger participants may have yielded different or differently useful findings.

Unexpected Observations

I did not expect members of the community to have such a coherent view of the ministry of the church or expectation of the priest and laity. While not informed or necessarily supported by any biblical or theological background, they still had a fairly clear view of what they believed the ministry of the church is and what they expected of the priests and laity. Much of that expectation appeared to be related to their experiences and the cultural nostalgia of the Second Elizabethan Era with its the myth of rural England complete with parochial features and Herbert-esque priest. Related to this is the significance of the church building. A common feature of missional thinking which was expressed by one of the congregational lay participants is that neutral sites like schools or village halls might be good spaces within which to hold Fresh Expression type services. Each of the community participants indicated a lack of desire to try to pray or engage in anything spiritual in such locations. Rather, they thought it strange. However, the demographics of these participants should not be ignored in this respect. Younger participants may have yielded a different result.

Further to the importance of the church building was the importance to these community members that actual worship with a real congregation was taking place in it. The building being maintained and open by an organization like the English Heritage Trust was not sufficient, even if it could still be used by licensed clergy for occasional offices. The building is able to be what it is for the community precisely because it is appropriate to and used for worship regularly.

The other unexpected observation was the significance and impact of presence. Across participants, where a priest was not present in the parish physically or

psychologically, there were more challenges. Where a priest was physically and psychologically present, things went more smoothly, and there were greater possibilities. Relatedly, I was unexpectedly struck by the priest's desire for the actual presence of their laity. They all articulated a need for more laity to do certain jobs and communicated the limits of mission and ministry resultant from a lack of lay engagement. However, more deeply than that was a desire for the laity to truly be with them in faith, mission, and ministry.

Recommendations

From this research three broad themes inform any recommendations. These themes are education, exploration, and further research. Two areas of further research would be useful. The first area of research would be to repeat this research methodology but restrict the purposive sample group to adult congregation and community members under forty years of age. The second area of research would be to repeat this research methodology in a variety of urban and rural contexts. It would be interesting to see if recurring interest and expectation around presence embodied in the priest and manifest through the building, regular worship, occasional offices, pastoral care, and community engagement is a more widely held pattern.

For instance, the Church of England report *Presence and Engagement* is principally concerned with inter-faith engagement in urban, multi-cultural, multi-faith environments. This is very different from the fairly homogeneous villages in the Dorking Deanery which do not even feature other Christian denominations, let alone other faith groups in any organized fashion. Much of the report appears to be related to the presence of the church in a given location and less of it relates to the presence of a priest (*Presence*

and Engagement 11–14). Interestingly, however, where the report does interact specifically with parish clergy, much of the expectation found in this research is an echo of what may be found in *Presence and Engagement.* The report found that parish clergy identified the attitudes and spiritual vitality of their congregations as the most commonly cited "enabling and encouraging" factor (*Presence and Engagement* 68). Among the general people resources the report found to be most commonly cited as helpful, more clergy was at the top of one of the report's lists, though specifically skilled (presumably lay?) Christian workers like youth workers, evangelists, and others were even more often cited (*Presence and Engagement* 72). More dialogue between this research, other reports such as *Presence and Engagement*, as well as further research on these themes across diverse contexts would be interesting.

With this in mind, this research recommends continued exploration around creative and sustainable means of deploying priests in even small communities and nurturing the lives of faith within congregations. This likely depends on the third and final recommendation theme of education. The most immediate and achievable educational goal is the development of a course for parish priests and their congregations. Such a course would educate about priestly and presbyterial ministry understood from a New Testament understanding of the words ἱερεύς and πρεσβύτερος as well as Church of England historical formularies and history. It also would provide the opportunity for clergy and laity to discuss these topics, become conscious of their understanding and expectations, communicate them, negotiate them, and monitor them. Within that is possibly some education and training of the clergy and congregations around their intentional discipleship of and deep nurture their spiritual lives.

Less immediately achievable but useful would be some kind of education directly to parish communities. This education is less about expectations of lay and priestly ministry and more about the unexpected observation of the necessity of reciprocal presence. The priest and congregation must be present to each other in a meaningful way. And the church must be present in the community in a meaningful way. But that also is reciprocal. If the community is not present to/in the church, the church's ability to remain present in/to the community is severely compromised and may not be durable. It is about more than money. It is about mutuality and reciprocity of relationships. This education is likely not a course, rather something like a social media campaign.

Postscript

In many respects this research has been an unlikely leg of my journey of academics and ministerial formation. Two of my three previous degrees were at Non-Conforming institutions and contexts related to urban, multi-ethnic, and cross-cultural themes. I had always envisioned conducting doctoral research, however, doing so in pursuit of a DMin had not been my pathway of choice. Neither had I anticipated digging deeply into Anglican ecclesiology or any rural context from a missiological perspective.

I began this research feeling a bit in over my head, as though I had jumped into the missiological deep end without foundational competence to not only stay afloat, but to swim confidently. What I found beyond the research was that this was not the case. The background in cross-cultural and multi-ethnic dimensions of mission and ministry were solid foundations. Ultimately, as the research findings reveal, the rural contexts I researched were and remain diverse. They are diverse within themselves and compared to each other. Each has a distinct culture and history, even if they are deeply related to one

another. Therefore, any new priest to a rural parish is something of a cross-cultural voyager. Perhaps this does not make them or rural ministry radically different than urban ministry.

The details and specifics of urban versus rural ministry are legion in their differences. Fundamentally, though, I am not so sure. The incarnational imperatives and impulses necessary for cross-cultural or multi-ethnic urban ministry are no less imperative in rural ministry. What the research has borne out is that presence is fundamentally key. It is also the foundation of incarnational ministry. It is an actual physical presence. But it is also deeper than that. It is a presence that enters and connects with a place and a people as and where it is and where they are.

In a previous dissertation I compared the Christian life to that of an Alter-Modern artist. The Alter-Modern artist was called upon to navigate across the various experiences of the modern world and through their art connect and "hyper-link" between them, acting as a translator. In the same way, the Christian exists in a context and seeks to translate, hyper-link, or otherwise connect that context with the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Nevins 28–29). However, one cannot do that work of mediation and translation without being present to both sides they are mediating. This speaks to the presence so clearly expected from all participants in the research. If there is not a presence of priest, congregation, and community, no translation or mediation is to be made because only one party is present.

Such presence can be intimidating and overwhelming. As mentioned earlier, I felt in over my head and overwhelmed as I set out on this research. The style and subject of research was foreign to me. I had no idea how I would translate or mediate myself, my previous study, and formation or my previous interests into this project. I had to learn

how to be present to it. Resultantly, I have grown. I have new understanding, new competence, and I have changed. At the end of the day, I think that is the fear for so many rural parishes and parishioners. Being present means allowing for change in oneself. It is safer to be absent. It is safer for the priest to be absent from the parish, the congregation to be absent from the priest, church or community, and for the community to be absent from the church. If we are not, we will all be changed. We will be transformed.

Hopefully such transformation is to the likeness of Christ. One thing remains clear from this research. Such transformation is not possible without presence. Transformation of expectations, resilience in unmet expectations, and negotiating expectations all become possible with presence. As a vicar of a parish that has some rural and some urban features, this leaves me with lingering questions. As I consider how this research has changed me personally, I also have to consider how it could have changed me as a priest, and how it might change my ministerial practice. It is time to imagine new ways of being present in my parish. It is also time to reimagine my practices of hospitality, ensuring that my congregation has the invitation and safety to be present with me. Likewise, as a church we must consider how we are not only present in and for the community, but how to reimagine our hospitality to ensure our community's sense of invitation and safety to be present to us as well. Perhaps then we will all change.

APPENDIX A

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Questions/Checklist to establish rapport and understand the perspective of participant

1. Name/Age/Gender
2. How would you describe yourself in relation to Jesus?
3. How would you describe yourself in relation to the Church?
4. What have been your best experiences of Church?
5. How would you describe your activity in the Church?

Questions/Checklist to help the participant start thinking about "ministry"

6. How do you think the members of the community understand "ministry" or "the ministry of the Church?"
7. How do you think your parish priest might understand "ministry" or "the ministry of the Church?"
8. How do you think the laity in the congregation understand "ministry" or "the ministry of the Church?"

Question do discern the participant's view of ministry

9. How do ***you*** understand "ministry" or "the ministry of the Church"?

Appreciative Questions/Checklist to discern the participants expectations of lay and priestly ministry

10. Could you describe a time when priestly ministry met or exceeded your expectations?
11. What would ideal priestly ministry look like in your parish?

12. Could you describe a time when lay ministry met or exceeded your expectations?
13. What would ideal lay ministry look like in your parish?

Opportunity to catch any items not on the checklist but valued by the participant

14. Is there anything we haven’t covered that you think is important or wish to speak about?

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Expectations of Priestly and Lay Ministry in the Rural Parishes of the Dorking Deanery

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Rev'd Peter Nevins, a doctoral student from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you are either a priest, congregational lay person or community member of one of the rural parishes of the Dorking Deanery of the Diocese of Guildford.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to take part in one 60-90 minute semi-structured interview conducted and recorded on Zoom. In addition to the recording, hand written notes will be taken by the researcher during the course of the interview, either on paper, digitally or both. Additionally, READ AI will record, transcribe and summarize the interview. The interview will be related to your understanding and expectations of lay and priestly ministry in your parish. No payment is connected to your participation in this research.

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.

Your participation in this research will remain confidential. The interview will be recorded digitally and digitally transcribed by READ AI. In addition to your identity being anonymized with either initials or a number, any names or identities you may share

in the interview will be kept confidential and anonymized by a number or initials. Any transcript or summary produced by READ AI will be redacted manually by the researcher according to the same anonymizing practices. Digital recording, transcriptions and other records will be kept on the researcher's biometrically and password secured laptop, tablet and/or handheld device and any handwritten notes on paper will be securely stored in the researcher's home study. Any recording, transcripts or notes will be deleted or destroyed upon the completion of the research with an anticipated date of 18th May, 2024. No research assistants will be used in the gathering, transcribing or analyzing interviews. The researcher's dissertation coach will also have access to this data and has signed a confidentiality agreement.

During the interview you will be asked to recall past experiences related to lay or priestly ministry. This has the potential risk of triggering negative or painful mental, emotional, physical and spiritual responses to past trauma.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please tell _____ who can be reached at _____ 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 _____ at _____

Signing this paper 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, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study Date Signed

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