Leadership and ministry, lay and ordained: Insights from rural multi-church groups

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LEADERSHIP AND MINISTRY, LAY AND ORDAINED: INSIGHTS FROM RURAL MULTI-CHURCH GROUPS

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2   At the start of the research Professor Weller was Professor of Inter-Religious Relations at the University of Derby. In the course of this research he retired from full-time employment and became Emeritus Professor of the University, but continued working on the project in his capacity as Director of Religion and Belief Research and Training Ltd. Professor Weller is now also employed again in a fractional Professorship in the University's Social, Cultural and Legal Research Centre. He is also employed in a fractional Professorship at Coventry University's Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations and as a Research Fellow in Religion and Society at Regent's Park College, University of Oxford

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SUMMARY OVERVIEW OF REPORT CONTEXT, FINDINGS AND RESOURCES

- This report examines and explores leadership challenges and opportunities in the setting of Christian ministry and witness within the rural multi-church context. The challenges arise from a combination of demographic and socio-economic changes coupled with inherited building, operational structures and patterns of ordained ministry. Collectively these factors have created a complex environment in which churches have been trying to maintain their ministry and witness in their local communities, while seeking what might now be the most appropriate and effective patterns within which to move forward. In order both to understand the context and the options, this report and the research project of which it is a product have sought to triangulate a number of different sources of information, insight and resources.

- Primary among these has been engagement through interviews with individuals (mostly ordained, but also some lay people) in the Church of England, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church who have responsibilities for local churches in a selected number of counties in England. A substantial part of the report presents their reported experience and voice as it was shared with the researchers so that readers of the report of necessity need to wrestle with this reported experience in all its contextual diversity. This voice is supplemented by the reported experience and voice of some of those who, in the Churches concerned, have wider than local responsibilities, thus giving readers of the report the benefit of reflection from those who, while they undoubtedly have a sense of strong bonds with the local churches within their respective areas, also have a measure of detachment from the exigencies of specific local contexts. Out of this primary data provided by those whose reported experience and voices lie at the heart of the research and the report, the project has articulated a number of ministry leadership models that it is believed are reflective of the thinking and approach of those interviewed.

- While the weight of the report is informed by the primary research data it has gathered, and it can cogently be argued that it is broadly representative of rural multi-church contexts, it is also important to acknowledge and recognize that this research does not stand alone. While research specifically on rural multi-church ministry, witness and leadership is limited (especially when considering the UK alone), there is a much wider literature reflecting a body of research in relation to leadership. This wider body of research and of the literature dealing with that is engaged with in the report's bibliographical review. Importantly this includes not only material on leadership articulated with reference to particularly Christian sources and concepts, but it also engages with broader leadership and management thinking. This is on the basis that organizational forms and the individuals and groups who function within them remain reflective of the generic dynamics that can be identified in individual and organizational life even when it may be believed theologically that particular ecclesiological forms, structures and approaches to leadership in ministry and witness might also have other (transcendent) frames of reference and dynamics at work.

- In many ways what the research has identified as key challenges and opportunities that are specifically highlighted in rural multi-church contexts, can also be seen as challenges and opportunities also for the wider Christian Church in an overall religious landscape that is arguably less Christian, more secular and more religiously plural than the one that gave birth to its inherited structures and approaches to ministry leadership.

● As stated by a project interviewee with wider than local responsibilities, the underlying challenge can be summarised as being that of "... taking people back to their roots but saying what does it look like in 2017 to live out the life of Jesus." But for this to happen, as explained by an Anglican priest (but applicable to ordained ministers of other denominations), "The role of the priest is to support the ministry of the church, not to do it." In addition, as argued by the interviewee with wider than local responsibilities, "Denominations must come out of their silos and rural ministry has to become more ecumenical....for the rural church that is the only way forward." In relation to each of these challenges there is a real tension between interviewees' recognition that patience is needed to bring about change; and yet also that many of the necessary changes should have begun one or two decades ago.

● In many ways a lack of confidence was identified as the biggest barrier in encouraging both clergy and lay people to look at ministry and witness new ways and to engage in learning and development opportunities. For some, a focus on formal training was a distraction from encouraging and supporting people to use their gifts. A one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate, but important for consideration and action are:

▶ Documents and resources should be made accessible as e-documents, this would allow greater access and would make it easier for them to be amended and kept up to date. This would also facilitate a greater sharing of resources and materials.

▶ Consideration needs to be given to extending the number of formal training courses at a local level as the research suggests that more people may be likely to engage.

▶ Bought in resources were identified as very useful, however they do need to be contextualised to rural need and to the knowledge level of the participants. Consideration should be given to the development of 'bite sized' online learning resources. These could be topic related and provide a taster session for some of the more in-depth or formal training programmes.

▶ When developing training, consideration should be given to a modular approach where there are several short courses that can be used to build confidence, reflection and experience throughout the learning process.

▶ Greater consideration needs to be given to developing more mentoring opportunities for lay people. This was identified as a more productive route for building confidence than sending people on training courses.

▶ Mentoring training would be of use to many preachers/ministers.

▶ Informal approaches to training such as mentoring were identified has having greater impact and being more profound. Opportunities to develop local informal courses should be considered as ways of building confidence and capacity and may lead to individuals taking on more formal roles.

▶ Going forward it will be useful to identify and adopt strategies that will help assess and capture data on the types of opportunities having greatest impact.

OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH AND THE REPORT STRUCTURE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS) at the University of Derby in collaboration with Professor Paul Weller, has been working with the Arthur Rank Centre (ARC) to undertake research to examine and explore the issues concerning leadership in the rural multi-church context.

1.2 In discussion with Jerry Marshall (then Chief Executive of the Arthur Rank Centre), Canon Dr. Jill Hopkinson and Revd. Elizabeth Clark, the overall project plan was adapted to fulfil the original project aims and objectives on which work had been commenced by another contractor who was unable to complete the research.

2. ORIGINAL PROJECT AIMS, FURTHER PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND PROJECT OUTPUTS

2.1 The main Christian denominations in the countryside are increasingly experiencing multiple challenges as churches are being grouped together under the care of one or more ministers. This is as consequence of many issues including reducing congregations, complex governance structures and decision-making, responsibility for buildings, difficulty in providing appropriate training and resources for lay ministry.

2.2   Collectively these create a complex environment in which churches are trying to maintain their ministry and contribute to the community. In relation to this, the original project aims had two distinct but interrelated components.

COMPONENT 1: Leadership Aims and Objectives

- Identify the benefits and disadvantages of different models of leadership available to clergy and lay people within multi-church groupings.

- Make recommendations for the training and development of skills for congregations and clergy, and work with partners to help develop key training resources.

- Share good practice examples to benefit others.

COMPONENT 2: Extending and Developing Lay Ministry

- Use a mapping exercise to identify the existing formal and informal approaches delivered by dioceses, districts and synods to develop lay ministry in rural multi-church groups.

- Make an assessment, based on the mapping exercise, of the usefulness and applicability of different forms of lay ministry development to rural multi-church groups, seeking to identify and share good practice.

- Identify ten case studies of rural multi-church groups that have developed lay ministry effectively and innovatively, to illustrate different aspects of good practice examples.

- Provide a directory of resources for use in lay ministry development in rural multi-church groups.

- Carry out a gap analysis to produce a timed and detailed action plan, identifying the additional resources, training courses and skills that still need to be provided to energise lay ministry in rural multi-church groups.

2.3   Taken together these components were intended to help to build a deeper understanding of the evidence base concerning leadership in the rural multi-church context. The methodology for the project as completed by iCeGS has been adapted from the original project brief and builds on the work completed by the previous researcher. The work involves a qualitative study, which utilised a literature review, in-depth interviews and website analysis. These approaches ensured we were able to undertake an in-depth exploration of the issues, maximising what has already been identified as good practice.

2.4   The outputs from these collectively provide the evidence to address the research questions for each of the original project components and enable the making of recommendations which will contribute to strategy and training to support the development of leadership including the development of lay ministry within rural multi-church contexts. In the light of the above, the agreed outputs from iCeGS included:

● **Highlights from the Rural Multi-Church Ministry Interviews**

The report is based on interviews with a range of key informants from the Church of England, Methodist Church, and United Reformed Church. The discussion guide used was not designed by the current research team, but by the previous researcher. Following two pilot interviews using the questionnaire/ guide, it was agreed that it would continue to be used in order to ensure consistency of approach and comparability of findings with the first set of interviews. This approach taken to the interviews was scrutinized and approved through the University of Derby's Fast Track ethical approval process which quality assures the research ensuring that it meets best ethical practice, protecting both participants and researchers. The present report constitutes this output.

● **Key Themes From Case Studies of Ministry Leadership Models**

Discussion of a number of case studies (eventually as included in this report, nine) taken from the rural multi-church ministry interviews and illustrating different basic approaches to ministry leadership.

● **Bibliographical Review of Leadership Models**

This focused on exploring both academic literature and local works provided to the project. It was undertaken with the aim of identifying relevant research that has already been undertaken in relation to leadership models in general and for the rural multi-church context in particular. The database search included the British Education Index (BEI), ERIC, Australian Educational Index, and Expanded Academic ASAP. Other general search engines and databases used include Primo Central, a generic cross-disciplinary resource comprising citations to around 400 million journal articles. Other specialist databases used were the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) religion databases that includes Religion Index One: Periodicals (RIO©); Religion Index Two: Multi-Author Works (RIT©); and Index to Book Reviews in Religion (IBRR©) which, in total, provide extensive coverage of over 1.6 million publications on religion. All of this was augmented by searches using Google and GoogleScholar to identify grey literature.

● **Resources Directory for Rural Multi-Church Lay Ministry Development**

To compile this directory, Diocesan, Synod and District websites have been examined where these highlight informal and formal approaches to developing lay ministry. In addition, research has been undertaken on resources provided by organisations that undertake lay ministry development.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM LOCAL RURAL MULTI-CHURCH MINISTRY INTERVIEWS

3. OVERVIEW OF THE INTERVIEWS AND INTERVIEWEES

3.1 The majority of interviews were conducted by staff of the University of Derby's International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS), although some were conducted by a previously contracted person. Interviews took place either by telephone (a mode of interviewing in which iCeGS have considerable experience) or face to face on location. Interviewees were given prior notice of the questions to be asked, meaning that they were, at least in principle, to some extent able to reflect on the questions and prepare for how they might go about answering them.

3.2 The interviews were initially analysed by Paul Weller and sense-checked by iCeGS staff involved in the project. The report is based on interviews with 21 people, including:

14 from the Church of England

4 from the Methodist Church

3 from the United Reformed Church

In terms of gender, those interviewed included:

11 MALES
(8 Church of England; 1 Methodist Church; and 2 from United Reformed Church)

10 FEMALES
(6 Church of England; 3 Methodist Church; and 1 from United Reformed Church)

The Church of England and Methodist interviewees included 1 lay person each.

3.3　In the main text of the report and in quotations from interviewees, the following letter codes are used as indicators of the interviewee's Church traditions and roles:

Church Traditions

E = Church of England interviewee

M = Methodist Church interviewee

U = United Reformed Church interviewee

Roles

L = Lay person interviewee having local ministry responsibility

M = Ordained minister interviewee having local ministry responsibility

S = Interviewee having wider than local resourcing specialist role

3.4　A reference to, or quotation from, a Church of England ordained minister interviewee having local ministry responsibility will therefore appear in the main body of the text as (EM)

3.5　A reference to, or quotation from, a United Reformed Church interviewee minister having wider than local ministry oversight will appear as (US).

4.　GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXTS

4.1　The geographies encompassed in the interviews were all in England, with the exception of one interviewee whose work also included churches that straddled the English and Welsh border.

4.2　In terms of counties, of the 16 locally based interviewees, these included 2 interviewees in Cambridgeshire; 1 in Dorset; 3 in Herefordshire; 1 in Kent; 5 in North Yorkshire; 1 in Shropshire; 2 in Somerset; and 1 in Staffordshire.

4.3　In terms of ecclesiastical areas, of the 16 locally based interviewees, from Church of England Dioceses these included 1 from Canterbury; 1 from Bath and Wells; 2 from Ely; 3 from Hereford; 2 from Lichfield; 1 from Salisbury; and 2 from York; from the Methodist Church, 3 from the Yorkshire and Hull District; and from the United Reformed Church, 1 from the Southwestern Synod.

4.4　The 16 local interviews highlighted the very wide variety of local church patterns that can be found in different rural contexts. Of the 5 interviewees that were not locally based, 1 one was an Archdeacon of a Church of England Diocese; 1 was a Moderator of a United Reformed Church Synod; 1 was a District Property Officer of the Methodist Church; 1 was a Training Officer of a Church of England Diocese; and 1 was a Training Officer of a United Reformed Church Synod.

4.5　In the main text of the report and in quotations from interviewees, the following letter codes are used as indicators of the interviewee's geographical locations:

C = Cambridgeshire	**K**	= Kent	**So**	= Somerset
D = Dorset	**NY**	= North Yorkshire	**St**	= Staffordshire
H = Herefordshire	**Sh**	= Shropshire	**Wo**	= Worcestershire

4.6 Thus building on the Church tradition and role codes in 3.3 above, a reference to, or quotation from a Church of England lay minister interviewee having local ministry responsibility in Cambridgeshire, and where there was only one such interviewee, will therefore appear in the main body of the text as (EL-C).

4.7 A reference to, or quotation from a Church of England ordained minister interviewee in Shropshire where there were two such interviewees will appear as either (EM-Sh1) or (EM-Sh2) in order to distinguish them.

5. PRESENTATION OF THE INTERVIEWS

5.1 The interviews are presented according to sections that follow, each covering a particular geographical area of the relevant local contexts for community, church and ministry. These sections each describe what the researcher has identified as key highlights from the interviews with interviewees having local responsibility for rural multi-church ministry, including, where appropriate, direct quotations from the relevant individuals where these seem to be particularly apt in clearly or sharply expressing a key theme. The attempt here is to present the material as contextually as possible in a way that is also compatible with the anonymity of the research participants. This proceeds on the basis of a key finding that has emerged from the research – and which is the critical importance of contextualised understanding (and then planning and action).

5.2 The presentation of sections organised by reference to local church ministry is then followed by an overall section that describes what the researcher has identified as key highlights from the interviews with interviewees who have wider than local responsibility for rural multi-church ministry, either in terms of oversight of churches and/or their buildings, or in terms of training. As in the local ministry sections it also includes, where appropriate, direct quotations from the relevant individuals where these seem to be particularly apt in clearly or sharply expressing a key theme. The granularity of the contextualisation of these interviewees is less than in local ministry sections in order to maintain participant confidentiality given the much smaller numbers that exist of wider geographical units and roles in the Churches concerned.

5.3 Each of the sections – whether covering local church ministry or wider than local church responsibility – is, for ease of reference, organised according to a common structure of sub-headings, as follows:

Geographical and Social Contexts:

Under this sub-heading, a brief introduction is given to the "flavour" of the locality out of which the interviewee/case study speaks. It is based on information provided by the interviewees, and therefore limited by what they provided or did not provide in each instance. While the emphasis is on factual information as given by the interviewees, in some case studies interviewee comment or interpretation is also given, usually by direct quotation, where it is felt that this will aid in giving "texture" to the brief description. Direct quotations are signalled by surrounding the relevant text with opening and closing inverted commas and putting it in italics.

Church Context:

Under this sub-heading, similarly, on the basis of information provided by the interviewees, is some basic information relating to the pattern of the local churches in which the interviewees worked. This is subject to same factors as described above in relation to the section on geographical and social contexts. In the section covering wider than local church responsibilities, the headings on "Geographical and Social Contexts" and "Church Context" are collapsed into a single section on "Context" that focuses primarily on "Church Context". This combined heading is also more limited in what it includes than the local church focus on local interviewee contexts. This is partly because the more removed from locality that one is, the more difficult it becomes to provide contextual information in a way that does not potentially compromise the anonymity of the research participants, while the value of such contextual information also reduces the more it is removed from the local level.

Interviewee Leadership Style and Training:

Under this heading information from, and evaluation by, the interviewee is provided on their personal experience of initial and continuing training in terms of both leadership and rural multi-church contexts. Given that the majority of the interviewees are ordained, this section largely deals with initial and continuing training for ordinands. In some instances, and especially in the section on wider than local ministry, this is either supplemented with, or (in one instance – that of the Methodist Property Officer) replaced by, information on and evaluation of, initial and continuing leadership in terms of the wider Church tradition of the interviewee.

Changing Church Culture:

Under this heading is recorded interviewee information about, and reflection on, aspects of the inheritance of local church culture in rural settings; about how that is changing in terms both of thinking and of various initiatives; in terms of how to go about initiating and following through change; and also in interaction with both the wider rural culture and the wider than local Church culture and organisation.

Whole Church Development:

Under this heading is interviewee information about, reflection on, and evaluation of the kinds of approach needed, and some of the courses and tools that exist and have been tried out in seeking to bring about the necessary change in culture in terms of a whole Church development perspective, and which is fully inclusive of lay members of the Church and the local churches. Especially under this heading (but also sometimes under the other headings above) when specific training programmes, resources and/or training roles are named, for ease of reference the names of these are put in bold (either italics or not, depending on whether the name appears in a direct quotation or not).

6. INTERVIEWEES FROM CAMBRIDGESHIRE CONTEXTS:

Interviewee (EM-C)

6.1 Geographical and social context

6.1.1 The area in which interviewee is located has a population of c. 8,000, consisting of Fenland rural communities on periphery of a Fenland town. The interviewee describes its character as being *"Very agricultural but most people don't work on the land"* while being an economically *"mixed bag."*

6.2 Church context

6.2.1 The interviewee works in an area that has 6 Church of England churches which are organised in two groups of 3 churches each. As the interviewee comments: *"They aren't currently linked, other than through the minister, however they are likely to become linked."*

6.2.2 There are 6 PCCs. In terms of their success in working as a group, the interviewee's evaluation was one of *"yes and no"*. One of groups had "Benefice Strategy Group" which started as a Mission Action Planning Group required by the Diocese but developed its own life, and which the interviewee thought occurred because *"the folks on it had been selected by the churches"*. Nevertheless it remained the case that, *"some of the churches were there for their own existence but others could see that there was a bigger picture, and we needed to invest in leadership development for the way ahead and the future."*

6.2.3 In terms of leadership, there is a formal team which, in addition to the interviewee who is an ordained clergyperson, is composed of a benefice administrator, a retired clergywoman, 4 Accredited Lay Ministers and 1 Licensed Lay Minister in training. Churchwardens also have option of involvement in the team, supported by training.

6.2.4   In relation to the churches, the interviewee said *"I ran them as different models at different times"* but ended using a circuit-based approach in order to help the churches get used to different people ministering. This was the basis that in the alternative, *"focal ministry"* approach (but which this particular interviewee meant an approach where a particular leader is assigned to a specific local church or churches), *"you are dependent on having the right people at the right place at the right time."*

6.3   Interviewee Leadership Style and Training

6.3.1   The interviewee reported having had no specific initial training on rural or rural multi-church ministry, although since ordination *"I did a bit of the **Arthur Rank Centre** stuff which was kind of helpful. The thinking has probably moved on since I went on the training."*

6.3.2   But the interviewee also commented that, in their understanding in relation to the person who is involved in offering leadership *"actually leadership in a rural parish although same in many respects"* and, in this sense, this interviewee felt that: *"The issues are the same between urban and rural, there is no distinction once you have a clear vision."* At the same time, the interviewee acknowledged that *"although I'm going to be the same person in any context actually rural ministry is distinctly different in other ways"* and that *"the contexts are different."*

6.3.3   In line with this observation the interviewee suggested that *"Rural support groups would be good, but it's still about the same things. Looking at different models, what models might work, otherwise the next phone call determines what you do next and then you're not going anywhere."* And in fact, in the interviewee's Diocese, they do now have a **regular Diocesan get-together with multi-church benefices** of which the interviewee said that is *"quite a helpful support thing. That is a good development."*

6.3.4   In more general terms, the interviewee has experience as a **Ministry Consultant** with the **Church Pastoral Aid Society (CPAS)**, noting that when this organisation changed to focus on leadership development, this interviewee became a **Leadership Development Adviser**.

6.3.5   Overall this interviewee notes that: *"I was aware that when I started out I had one village and one church, and when I concluded my ministry I had six churches"* in the light of which *"What would have been really useful was facing up to reality sooner. I think that the Church of England senior leadership has been in denial for a long time – it's now out in the open, and they are talking about churches that may not sustain, we are going to have to invest in leadership in order to maintain our churches."*

6.4   Changing Church Culture

6.4.1   The interviewee noted: *"Everyone still hankers after the days when we all had our own vicar"* while expressing the view that *"increasingly the role of a Priest is like that of a manager....and I don't think there's much training about managing"*. Concretely, especially in a rural multi-church context *"you're often managing people and their expectations as well as a whole network of things across six churches."*

6.4.2   There is also the issue that *"powerful people in each church want it their own way"* and that because of this *"when you're looking at the way ahead.....you're up against what had always been done"*. Because of this *"It takes time, and some people get it – some don't, but you have to decide that you're going to be on a journey, you can call it 'vision building' really."*

6.4.3   In order to tackle the issues posed by individual church self-interest, the interviewee formed a **Benefice Strategy Group** with representation from each of the churches: *"I wanted to enable the Strategy Group to be the ones to bring about the change message. If it's acceptable to them, they can then sell it on to their constituents."*

6.4.4   On the basis of that approach, the interviewee explained *"we did a vision building series"* in which we looked to identify *"spiritual gifts and passions"* because in terms of changing church culture it is ultimately about *"vision and values"* but also as rooted in a specific context of *"how we do things around here"*. This is because the interviewee felt that *"If you go counter-culture, however good your theory it just won't work."*

6.4.5   The approach underpinning this was one of *"Basically, God's kingdom-building ought to arise out of what he's given us. We started with the question 'Why' first, before 'How'?"* and so *"I came as a vision bearer, but we can achieve anything God wants us to do because we are God's people and he has given us resources"*. In short summary: *"We were trying to discern what God is trying to say to us, and then move forward in a strategic way."*

6.4.6   *"**Mission Action Plans** are a good idea….but to put this into action I was looking for people who could provide leadership"* since *"If you don't invest in leadership and have a strategy for that, then it doesn't happen"* but for this to be possible: *"We needed people who were called by God into leadership, so we needed to identify those people who could be trained in leadership."*

6.4.7   When trying to effect culture change, *"The management of expectations is a big job, yet as we moved on, most people got it"* although *"You have some people prepared to embrace the future, and those who never will be. Others in the middle who might if it suits them. There's a whole spectrum."*

6.4.8   In time the effects of these approaches can be seen since in these churches *"other people would chair the PCC meetings in the main"* and *"pastoral care was also undertaken by other people in the main. Reports would be received by me which meant I knew what was going on."*

6.4.9   The interviewee thought that if rural churches were going to flourish, then ordained ministers in rural contexts have to prioritise youth work, discipleship and mission, which the interviewee noted were *"the three areas that in rural ministry apparently ministers run away from."*

6.5   **Whole Church Development Training**

6.5.1   Faced with the challenge of changing culture, *"It seemed to be that we needed to develop lay ministry as the Church couldn't continue otherwise"* and in the view of the interviewee this was best done via *"teaching and educating."*

6.5.2   In terms of leadership *"I used the CPAS Course to provide leadership training called **Growing Leaders** which is a year-long course that starts with leadership purpose and then competences."* And last year the interviewee trained 25 people on this including 12 from his Benefice. **Arrow Leadership Development Course** is the model used. In this *"you're going on a journey with God with a mentor to support you."*

6.5.3 More broadly *"I think initially helping them to grow spiritually through courses like **Alpha** and **Bible study** so that folks become what God wants to work with them and through them."* The churches have also used a **Bible Society course called Open the Book**. Originally this was developed for work in schools, but in this instance it had been used in a church context and, according to the interviewee, *"working well as lay initiative….group for three years."* They have also used **Alpha**, and **Pilgrim** and **Christianity Explored**.

6.5.4 The interviewee explained that *"We can do things where they are resourced appropriately. We have to play to people's strengths"*. So it is very much a case having a range of possibilities since: 6 young people do **Growing Young Leaders** course; *"Several of my people have done the sort of **Bishop's Certificate** type thing, theology"*; but also *"Several of them go on various courses, you know, **pastoral courses** I've had people on"*; and *"Obviously we do a **safeguarding course**."*

6.5.5 Within this range of things, in terms of methods, the interviewee felt that one should have *"a mixture of all things"* in which *"we have little bit of input, we do visual stuff, interactive, fun things"* on the basis that *"If it was all one dimensional it worked for some and not for others."*

6.5.6 The interviewee also expressed the view that: *"on the whole in rural areas if you're going to do a bit of training people like to get together"* but also that whatever is done, *"things have got to be professionally done, I think they've got to be relevant and they've got to be relevant to the person and relevant to the context."*

Interviewee (EL-C)

6.6 Geographical and social context

6.6.1 The area in which interviewee is located in a low income Fenland area with two thirds of the population retired.

6.7 Church context

6.7.1 The interviewee works in a church context in which there are 2 parishes with 3 Church of England churches, one of which has some Methodist involvement. The congregations range in size between 10-12 for the smallest church, through 25-30 in the middle, to 35-40 in the largest.

6.7.2 Structurally, each parish has a PCC and there is a Benefice Strategy Group *"who look at strategy and vision who look at where we are going, how are we going to grow God's kingdom"* and which the interviewee thought worked quite well.

6.7.3 In terms of leadership, together with the interviewee (who is an Authorised Lay Minister) there is a part-time Priest in charge, although there will soon be a new priest in charge albeit in the future presiding over 5 parishes. There is also a retired priest and a Licensed Lay Minister who share in leading worship. Then there are two churchwardens in each parish and also an Authorised Lay Minister for youth, and a Licensed Lay Minister in training.

6.7.4 The interviewee expressed the view that *"The lay ministry is important and the priests couldn't cope without"* because Authorised Lay People do *"Pastoral Care, Parish Administration, there are lots of different ones."*

6.8   Interviewee Leadership Style and Training

6.8.1   The interviewee did the *CPAS Growing Leaders for Growing Churches* course for one year, the aim of which she said was *"to look at leadership within your churches, within the church context and how to do it better"*. From this course, she said that *"What I learnt most was that you have to encourage and lead people particularly when you're working with volunteers….if you are bringing something new into your church culture the best way is to take your congregations with you."*

6.8.2   She also stated that she *"found my relationship with my mentor who had done the course a couple of years before, I found that very interesting"* as well as that *"you learn the most within the discussion groups."*

6.9   Changing Church Culture

6.9.1   When the priest came, *"people expected to be ministered to, but now they appreciate that we minister to each other"* and *"I think the very elderly find it difficult, some more than others"*. But in terms of governance her priest *"chose not to chair the PCC because he felt it was important to have Lay Vice Chair…so he could go to the PCC he felt he was needed most. It gave him more flexibility. He trusted the PCCs to do their own thing."*

6.9.2   The interviewee noted that: *"The traditional way was that that priest does everything – that is no longer viable and I think a lot of priests realise that now."* Then the move was *"to give one Priest more and more parishes, ultimately that's not sustainable"*. In this context, the interviewee argued that *"My opinion is that I think the role of the priest has changed and we need to allow priest to do what they are best at, and Lay Ministry supports in every area."*

6.9.3   Examples given of change and development largely resourced by lay people include a monthly Friday Night Live Fresh Expressions; Time for Tea family service; Coffee Drop In, to which two thirds come who are not church members – *"very much a village thing"*. There is also a monthly ploughman's lunch; fortnightly photography group; and a weekly crafts group.

6.9.4   In relation to traditional services and governance constraints, the interviewee says *"I could lead a service but legally there has to be a priest or a churchwarden present. So there are restrictions due to Church of England rules that limit in some ways."* In relation to these rules, *"Traditionally they were very much adhered to"* but now *"the rules are being relaxed"*. Due to Church of England governance rules about Holy Communion, *"Some multi-church parishes use Communion by extension on a regular basis"*. This is *"when the bread and wine are blessed by a Priest at a service and taken to another Church, the liturgy is slightly changed, so then a Licensed Lay Minister could provide Communion by extension."*

6.9.5   In their churches, they have a *Do It Yourself Sunday* using adapted liturgy of Morning Prayer by churchwardens and also an Authorised Lay Minister. Of this, the interviewee comments that: *"People were surprising accepting of that, despite being slightly concerned about people not being happy with it"* and that *"I think that service has actually enhanced our worship and been a catalyst for more lay ministry"*. In summary, the interviewee said that *"I feel that we have come some way but you can never achieve the end goal. We want to grow both in terms of church worship and growing God's kingdom in the community."*

6.10   Whole Church Leadership Development

6.10.1   The interviewee's Diocese has a *"Licensed Lay Ministry course (Reader)* that takes place over four years, during the first two years of which they work with ordinands, while the *Authorised Lay Ministry Course* is now a 10 week Discipleship Course followed by a year in your particular skill, with the training specified to whatever you are doing."*

7. INTERVIEWEE FROM DORSET CONTEXT:

Interviewee (EM-D)

7.1 Geographical and social context:

7.1.1 The area in which interviewee is located has a large village of c. 3,200; other villages of c. 800-900 people; some villages of c. 200-300; and some hamlets of c. 35-70 people. The location is not "deep rural" as it is within 15 minutes of a different kind of area. Nevertheless it is still very agricultural, although tourism is becoming quite significant. As noted by the interviewee, *"there is quite a lot of deprivation here but it is hidden away."*

7.2 Church context

7.2.1 The interviewee's church context is one in which there have been 14 Church of England churches working together in a team for the past c. 30 years, and now with 2 ministers. The interviewee thought that, generally speaking the congregations are a bit more middle class and wealthier than the populations they serve.

7.2.2 Structurally there are 12 PCCs and one group of parishes has a joint PCC. There is also a ***Team Council*** which the interviewee explains is *"technically a layer of management on top of the PCC"* at which each church is represented by a churchwarden and one other. But although *"we have been a team for a long time"* there is *"still resistance over the fact we are a team, even thirty years down the line."*

7.3 Interviewee Leadership Style and Training

7.3.1 The interviewee did not think that their initial training had included anything on leadership or, at least: *"It wasn't explicitly said that now this is the leadership training."*

7.3.2 In relation to continuing training: *"I guess a lot of my leadership skills have come through working alongside other leaders being kind of encouraged like in my curacy for example working alongside with my training incumbent. But I've never done any formal, I haven't done any, you know, formal leadership training really."*

7.3.3 What the interviewee would really like in relation to training is: *"I would love to have access to a regular network of people who work in similar circumstances to me"* since although *"in theory that should be the chapter"*, it doesn't always work like that. *"So I'd love to meet regularly with other people doing mission in rural areas and to share good practice, to talk about theology and to peer to peer kind of mentor each other."*

7.3.4 The interviewee also expressed that *"I wish there was more online learning available but….I don't know whether that the average person perhaps 20 or 30 years older than me requires that as much."*

7.4 Changing Church Culture

7.4.1 Despite the formal position with the Team Council, the interviewee comments that currently *"it's fairly impotent and people ignore it"* and in practice each PCC considers itself independent. Therefore, *"What we are hoping to do….is to acknowledge the power the team council have and do away with the individual PCCs. So potentially the team council will become the instrument for governance for all 14 churches and then there will be delegated responsibilities to local churches for their own fabric and local finances."*

7.4.2 To attempt to do this represents: *"an enormous change and because of the statute its being set up under if one church rejects we won't be able to do it. Hence we are doing it delicately, gently and slowly and lots of consultation"* via a working party. This is because: *"there is this feeling that big teams are set up to rationalise clergy appointments…which is true because when the team was set up it had a team rector and three team vicars and now it's just the team rector and the team vicar"*. The reason they want to do it is not for structure as such, but in order *"to release people to have time to do mission rather than internal maintenance."*

7.4.3 The interviewee felt themselves very fortunate in their role because in contrast with that of the interviewee's clergy colleague who has more legal responsibility, the role has a more *"pioneering brief"* with 50% of time devoted to that. What was additionally helpful is that this had been well prepared for in the appointment process so that both the interviewee and the churches *"knew that was what I was here to do so there was an expectation that new things would come which is a lovely way to be."*

7.4.4 The interviewee comments that in setting up Messy Church and After School Club Congregation the churches have been *"overwhelmingly supportive"* and lay people have been very much involved. The interviewee thinks that this is because *"they were told that nothing would change that already existed in terms of Sunday rotas or services and things like that. The only thing that was new was coming, was coming in addition to what already existed."*

7.4.5 In addition, the interviewee explained that *"I very firmly said from the beginning that whatever new things we do this will not grow Sunday congregations and I think that's been the hardest thing for people to get their heads around is that we are growing kingdom not congregation"* because *"the kind of nature of growing disciples is that you can't make people into paid up members of the Church of England straight away and in fact they may never be in terms of what people have seen in the past."*

7.4.6 The growth of new forms of church, including when successful can bring new challenges. For example: *"the congregations are still the ones that are paying the parish share, who are fundraising, who are kind of resourcing this growth and I think in terms of investment I think some of them would like a return on it you know"*. Also, although initially the new developments had been accepted as a plus without the loss of the traditional, it had in between become the case that *"we are stretched to capacity so now we only have the option to start changing the traditional in order to resource the new."*

7.5   **Whole Church Leadership Development**

7.5.1   *"I think at the moment we don't invest enough in our lay people to enable them to be released into what God's called them to do"* with the latter being the main focus because *"I think too many of our lay people go 'that's what needs to be done, I'll do it, rather than 'God's called me to do x, where can I do that'. So they kind of squish themselves into the holes that are vacant rather than responding to the shape they already are."*

7.5.2   Quoting a well-known line traditional Church of England figure George Herbert's hymn, 'Seven whole days not one in seven I will praise you', the interviewee says *"And that's our kind of approach now, is about helping and equipping everybody….actually how do we live as Christians in the world…and I'm not sure it has been that intentional in the past so it does change how you think about how you preach and how you worship and how you teach and all that kind of stuff."*

7.5.3   The intentionality of this can be quite a contrast with *"the kind of spirituality of those who've always grown up in the rural church"* and when *"incomers"* arrive, sometimes what the interviewee calls *"a definite disconnect between the two"* can open up. Reflecting on this the interviewee opines that: *"It seems that the rural church hasn't done perhaps its best in terms of discipleship but is very good in community, that's the strength I think of the rural church, you know, this is your church for your whole community."*

7.5.4   Overall the biggest challenge faced by the interviewee has been that *"I think the thing I've really struggled with is equipping lay people to take leadership. They are very, very, very happy to serve but I find huge reluctance to take a kind of ownership of the leadership."* In relation to this, *"The thing I find is some of our best lay leaders actually are already doing what God's called them to do and the training they need, whilst they may need a bit of finessing potentially and actually probably need **mentoring and walking along the side** far more than they need a course that comes out of the book."* And in any case the interviewee noted that **Diocesan central lay training** can be a three and half hour round trip, although after a long time the Diocese has produced material to deliver locally that has worked better.

7.5.5   Some lay worship leaders in the churches had been trained as part of new **Diocesan programme for lay worship leaders**. But, and especially in relation to certification of training, the interviewee says, *"I am slightly ambivalent….to current procedures in place"* because the formality of this means *"there's less flexibility for us as clergy to empower people really when we see their calling and vocation."*

7.5.6   Based on the interviewee's own experience of mentoring, they said in relation to training support for lay people *"I think I would like to be able to **mentor lay people** better"*. At the same time, in relation to more formal courses, including with qualifications, while *"I think we do have kind of professional course goers in our congregation"* but it *"depends on what you are doing."* This is because more formality and some certification can be useful as it *"gives them quite a lot of confidence potentially in face of criticism."* And this is not least the case because lay leadership in many spheres can still be seen as second class and so qualifications can *"sort of make leadership more equal, but I don't think it's necessary to enable, you know not everybody has to be licensed in order to do something, but I can see the value of it."*

8.   INTERVIEWEES FROM HEREFORDSHIRE CONTEXTS:

Interviewee (EM-H1)

8.1   Geographical and social context

8.1.1   The area in which interviewee is located has a population of c. 1,200. The Interviewee describes the character of this area as being *"as though somebody got a map and ground a pepper grinder over the top of it and where the grains landed decided that's where houses would be"* with *"lots of people are sort of living just dotted all over the place"* in a context where *"there's a lot of farming and farm tracks and people living down the end of remote farm tracks"* and *"there's an infrequent bus services."*

8.1.2   Although there is *"a lot dependent on agriculture"*, it is also the case that there are the retired who *"moved out here a nice place to retire to"* and also, *"professional commuting is here."*

8.2   Church context

8.2.1   The interviewee works in a church context in which there are 7 Church of England churches, out of which 6 have been together for c. 20 years and were joined by the seventh 2 or 3 years ago. The interviewee commented that *"I think church congregations probably do fairly accurately reflect the make-up of the area"* except *"not in terms of age profile"* where they are lacking in terms of youth.

8.2.2   Structurally, the churches are organised as a single PCC with *"local church committees"* but as the interviewee *"I think there is an issue about structures"* because he feels that the churches were *"strong armed by the diocese that that was the way they had to go"*, commenting that in reality it is *"a bit of a mishmash"*, and noting that *"The deanery plan was pushed through by a particularly strong character who has subsequently moved and I'm not sure that terribly many other people know what the deanery plan is, is a terribly good idea so there's a degree of flux in uncertainty with it all."*

8.2.3 The challenge of this as identified by the interviewee is that: *"I think most people would see their sense of belonging first and foremost to the local church that they're part of"* because the *"different settlements are very different in many ways"* and, in highlighting the importance of physical geography for rural communities and rural churches, noting that some are on *"the other side of the river."*

8.2.4 In terms of leadership, there is a retired Non-Stipendiary Minister and a Lay Reader who lives outside the area but leads worship. There is also a Growth Group, which is a working group of the PCC; and a Pastoral Care Team which replaced a previous one that fell apart when someone moved on. *"We have a staff meeting every six weeks or so something like that"* which is *"fairly informal."*

8.2.5 *"The Pastoral Team in theory meet every three months and that's supposed to be a general debrief about what we've been doing, ongoing training, a bit of bible reflection all sorts of stuff like that."* Within that, those *"who are less good at turning up tend to be the ones who see the role of the pastoral team to help the vicar out....their role isn't anything more than to be a good neighbour, anything spiritual is not their role."* Bearing this in mind the interviewee notes that *"There's a paradox – that they're reluctant to take decisions collegially but will occasionally take decisions individually without any sort of reference to anybody whatsoever."*

8.3 Interviewee Leadership Style and Training

8.3.1 *"I would hope that my style of leadership hasn't changed particularly because I would hope that I'm applying the right style in different circumstances."*

8.3.2 In relation to initial training, the interviewee said that *"I don't have any particular sort of beef about my training"* in so far as *"I think within the confines of what can be done in two years I think they did as much as they reasonably could do."*

8.3.3 The training undertaken was of a **Postgraduate Diploma distance learning** kind, and a project done within it reflected on the situation of a vicar of three villages was entitled *"from Father to Midwife".*

8.4 Changing Church Culture

8.4.1 The churches had a 1990s mission statement that was not owned by them. However, more recently a **Lay Mission Enabler** came from deanery and *"Now we've had her report and we've taken that to the PCC and we've tried to put together a work plan."*

8.4.2 However the interviewee feels that at least a number in the churches think *"We'll sit back and hope that somebody does something"* expressing the view that *"I think it ties in with a consumer view of society."*

8.4.3 In religious terms, *"lay people I think see ministry as what goes on with the church in which they may have a role to help....and how you enable people to see ministry as belong to something more much more widely is a challenge"* because there is a tendency among these churches to think that *"The role of the clergy is to provide services, events, care, that people may want to avail themselves of or not."*

8.4.4 Nevertheless there are signs of change. So, for example, because the interviewee thinks that *"the people who are part of the churches....tend to see ministry in terms of pastoral care"* the fact that *"now .... people are chuntering that the pastoral team aren't visiting....I see that as a great step forward."*

8.4.5   In terms of lay ministry, the interviewee thinks that if one was to ask the lay people what they do *"they would say things like the pastoral team but also things like churchwarden, PCC, secretary, treasurer all those different roles."*

8.5   **Whole Church Leadership Development**

8.5.1   In terms of involving lay people into leading worship the interviewee prefers a more informal approach of *"putting on a couple of sessions"* albeit with the added dimensions of *"getting someone from the diocese to come and do that"* because *"whilst I could have done that it gives it more credibility to someone from outside."*

8.5.2   Thus, *"As a deanery we've tried to put on various training events and there's been a degree of support for those"*. The interviewee noted that *"The diocese....has a **scheme for authorised lay ministry**"* and *"a couple of people on the team had done a **diocesan training course on pastoral care**"* but *"it doesn't seem to have made a tremendous amount of difference"* although *"I've got someone who has just completed a **community development course as an ALM**."*

8.5.3   Finally, the interviewee explained that they had been leading all the parish based training. This includes ***Alpha***, and ***Emmaus*** has been used a few times, along with ***Pilgrim*** material and the ***CPAS's Lost for Words course***. In relation to these the interviewee comments that *"It does tend to be a little bit of sort of the usual suspects turning up, but not exclusively so."*

Interviewee (EM-H2)

8.6   **Geographically and social context**

8.6.1   The area in which the interviewee is located consists of 2 villages and 7 hamlets and has a population of c. 2,500.

8.7   **Church context**

8.7.1   The interviewee's church context consists of 9 Church of England churches. Of these, 7 have been grouped together since the mid-1970s and 2 were added in the mid-1980s. There is an electoral role membership of 157 people across the 9 churches, with attendances varying from 25-30 at one church, with others in the mid- teens, and others at less than 10. One church has in practice become a "festival church", meeting only 4 or 5 times a year.

8.7.2   Structurally speaking there is a single PCC for the whole new parish with Church Committees for each of 7 original churches. However, the interviewee felt that they ended up with all but 9 PCCs since *"primarily the church focus on their own existence and their own communities."*

8.7.3   In terms of leadership, there is *"not a formal leadership team as such"*, but rather an informal approach. When the interviewee was first appointed there were 4 or 5 designated worship service leaders who led worship, but were not authorised to preach. Now two retired priests and 3 lay Readers (all in their 70s) help with leading worship services, Only 3 of the churches have pairs of churchwardens and in relation to the securing of parish officers generally, *"it's very much running up a down escalator to be honest."*

8.8   Interviewee Leadership Style and Training

8.8.1   The interviewee sees themselves primarily as: *"Encourager, facilitator really I've always tried to encourage people to discover and exercise their own gifts, qualities, skills and experience"* and as *"a gentle leader."*

8.8.2   In relation to their experience of initial ministerial training *"It wasn't really training for ministry. It was theological education....looking back on it very little of it actually touched base for me....I never even thought about you know rural multi-church groupings at that stage"* and so *"I learnt from the hoof really in terms of rural ministry"* and *"the only thing I can ever remember ...was being taken out for the day as a group up the Tyne Valley to be shown the geography of the Tyne Valley where the Methodist churches used to be but no longer were."* In terms of in-service training, *"seriously not really.....there was no input about rural churches, rural ministry."*

8.8.3   The interviewee's conscious approach to ministry has *"always been personal and relational and to try as far as possible to erode this sense of us and them. Those who go to church and those who don't."*

8.9   Changing Church Culture

8.9.1   From the perspective of the interviewee, *"I call this parish the parish of spinning plates, it feels like that a lot of the time."*

8.9.2   In relation to projects to create unity across the churches that have been grouped together: *"My experience is that you can put an awful lot of energy into that but at the end of the day it doesn't actually, it might work to some extent in some places but there is no blueprint that works everywhere."*

8.9.3   Pastoral care works well informally and there is this sense that *"we don't need this to be co-ordinated, we don't need a label stuck on it because if you put a label on something the sense is you are asking people to make a commitment in hours or deeds or whatever, whereas informally they are quite happy to get on and do it."* The interviewee says that it has been their experience that *"rural folk kind of distance themselves as soon as you mention the word of ministry they are quite happy to do what they do but they don't want you to actually put a label on them."*

8.9.4   *"In a business I am the paid person everybody is else is a volunteer"* but it is also the case that *"a lot of support and activity comes from lay folk in the church but also in the wider community"*. In rural areas it can still be the case that even if you don't go to church *"an awful lot of good will goes on and sometimes we don't give enough credit to that."* Thus while in relation to the role of historic buildings *"The amount of effort that has gone into you know fundraising has been tremendous"* nevertheless *"For all the difficulties of keeping these old buildings functioning and user friendly and all of that and that time that that takes, the energy that that takes, there is still the sense that you know you're here for the community, the whole community and nothing but the community."*

8.9.5   Overall, the general sense is that *"it's about survival, it's about how we keep our, how we keep our church going.....the bemoaning the fact that there aren't any young families or young people coming to church, but at the same time wanting progress, but not wanting change."*

8.9.6   The churches do have quite a lot of professional and professional retired people. However, *"the problem is those who are active within the congregation very much have their nose to the grindstone really in just keeping the church open, the bills paid, doing what they can to encourage*

others to come and they just don't have the time and energy for much beyond that" so the interviewee is of the opinion that: *"one of the things I think the Church of England is beginning to wake up to it but it needs to realise that it has a ministry for those already sitting in seats…. because I think there are sometimes people feel forgotten"* and that of those already involved in church *"Primarily they like things to be done decently and in order and I think that when push comes to shove they want me to be there for them otherwise the rest of the time they will just get on with life."*

8.9.7 By contrast in terms of new things, twice a month for three years now Contemplative Spirituality Group meets – a sort of Fresh Expressions, though open to people of other than Christian faiths so *"that is slightly opposite end of the spectrum to the kind of charismatic renewal house group, we use a lot more silence and a lot less words."* Last year some *"chose 6 films to sit and watch, though they had some deep theological implications."*

8.9.8 They have a Mother Church-type pattern of services for the first Sunday in month. This is not fixed but rotates across churches. The churches are also encouraged to *"do something for their Patronal Festival either on or close to the day it actually falls."* One church has regular Scarecrow Sunday. Alongside worship there is also a Food Bank because *"rural poverty actually exists and a rural genuine outreach going from here."*

8.10 Whole Church Development

8.10.1 The interviewee reflects that: *"I can count on one hand I think in the five and half or so years I have been here, the number of people who have actually you know gone off and done a course of some kind or another."*

8.10.2 In relation to prepared programmes *"I am a home baker in that because it has to touch me before I can….I just couldn't get into it, it just doesn't work for me"* although this is *"not in any way to demean or criticise those courses"* In terms of shared work, though, *"they do try to run **Lent Groups** as a parish event."*

Interviewee (EM-H3)

8.11 Geographical and social:

8.11.1 The area in which interviewee is located straddles the English and Welsh borders with a population of c. 4,500. The area as a whole includes some very rural parts and also some town *"council estate overflow."*

8.12 Church context

8.12.1 The interviewee (who is formally retired as a priest) works in a group of five Church of England churches, of which 3 are in England and 2 in Wales which have been organised together for about a decade and a half. The congregations have attendances that can range from 3-4, through 8 or, to 17, 20ish and 25-26.

8.12.2 In terms of leadership, the interviewee says that *"we are in the process of change"* as at present they don't have a ministry team as such, but together with the interviewee there is an incumbent and another colleague who is about to retire, and they meet weekly.

8.12.3 In terms of lay leadership *"part of the problem for us and I suspect lots of other churches is the fact that two of our churches have no wardens"* although the PCCs are working generally quite well. And in relation to the Wardens, *"they have a role which needs to be done"* but also it is the case that *"when we haven't got them we seem to function quite well."*

8.12.4 In terms of working together, the churches *"are happy to meet together, they have worked together for quite a long time and they know each other quite well"* but *"they all got specific things that they need to discuss and the problems."*

8.13   Leadership and Training

8.13.1 The interviewee had previous experience of being a Reader, although in relation to the training for that, despite taking place in a very rural Diocese, *"I don't think…the particular nuances or rural ministry were discussed to any great extent."*

8.13.2 Overall in relation to ordained ministry training, drawing on previous experience of secular teacher training, the interviewee thinks in relation to the parallel case of ministry training, *"you need to know theology. But you also need to be effective in your job"* in which context you need *"to be visited and people see you doing things, not in a critical way but in a critical frame, in a supportive way…where you spend a lot of time with people afterwards making suggestions and linking theory to practice"* in which one can also benefit in learning from feedback.

8.13.3 In fact, in initial training, the only time the interviewee really received feedback was when on a placement. And while post-ordination training *"was quite good"*, again it was *"quite theological quite a lot of it and I can read the Bible. I need to be encouraged to read the churchyard regulations."*

8.13.4 The interviewee also thinks that there is a problem with *"the way the Church of England is structured"* and also an issue about *"calling"* in that *"not everybody who is in rural ministry or is ministry whatever is called to be a manager"*, but drawing on previous experience of senior management in other organisational contexts to argue that while *"I like the idea of being able to delegate"* ultimately *"benign dictatorship is good"* in which context, *"I had to take advice and listen to advice but ultimately I would listen to lots of advice and then I felt right, I need to take, I have to make a decision…and you have to be prepared to admit, sometime you are going to be wrong."*

8.13.5 Overall, then, in relation to ordination training, this interviewee feels there is a need for something more *"professional"* with *"much more mention of management"* and *"doing some analysis and working out where one's strengths are and really playing to one's strengths"* and would like there to be an *"analysis of governance ….taking on board some good practice from elsewhere."*

8.14   Changing Church Culture
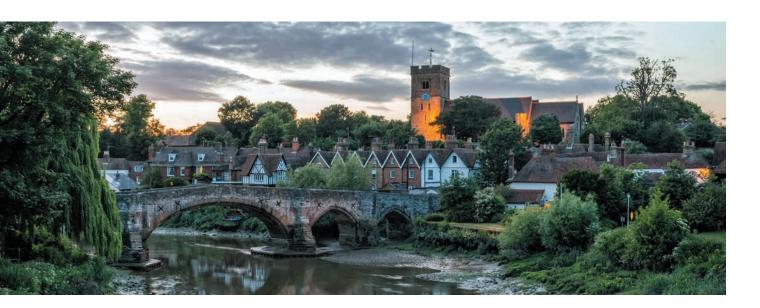
8.14.1 In relation to governance *"people get stuck in positions and I think it would be wonderful if the Diocese would insist on people being Wardens for no more than, you know, seven years."* Part of the challenging is ageing congregations, but also, *"what we are not getting is younger people coming forward."* And one can't *"persuade people to take the job on because they   think oh go on then I am going to be stuck there forever"* and so *"actually it gets in the way, better off without."*

8.14.2 There has been a lot of debate about the number and timing of the services to be held in the different parishes, reflective of different local needs and realities in the context of which we it has had to be made clear to some of the churches that in order to maintain some regular patterns of worship *"you will need to manage it for yourself on occasion…because you know we can't do it we haven't got the people to do it."*

8.14.3 The churches had an *"outreach 2016"* which was *"partly to do with sort of mission locally"* but also to try to secure engagement and ownership from across all the churches collectively. It was to act as a launchpad also for bringing into play a new team structure representing various aspects of the group of churches from outreach to ministry.

8.14.4 In terms of new initiatives they have *"sort of service of the Word"* in a village hall, where they also cook breakfast, and that is *"quite popular you know…the best attended service of the month."* But in another village hall where they tried to do something, they encountered local suspicion.

8.14.5 At one point the interviewee felt they had almost six parishes because there were the 5 churches and then *"this other parish of eclectic people who are you know 'oh I do believe in God and all the rest by no I don't need to go to church, but I do like getting together with you now and then.' I think there is more room for them and we should be trying to get, you know, to get away from Sundays."*

8.15 Whole Church Development

8.15.1 The interviewee has a background in adult education and says of lay people that *"what you really want them to do is to sort of spend more time thinking about what it is that we actually believe"*, and this has happened somewhat through *"quite useful little courses"* that have mainly taken place in people's homes in the evenings. One such Bible study was **Harrowing for the Heroes of Christianity** which was *"great fun"* and was very broad. One on Old Testament texts did not secure such engagement. They have also done **Alpha** but the problem with that being run from across a group of rural churches especially is that *"at the end of that they don't stick to a church."*

8.15.2 In terms of lay leadership of worship they consulted with the Diocese about this in the context of a potential benefice reorganisation, and there is *"going to be a sort of lay-led you know team."* They have identified a few potential people and *"we are hoping they will form the basis of our sort of ministry team."*

8.15.3 The interviewee thinks that to develop lay leadership *"to some extent the incumbent needs to be always quite charismatic in achieving this and I don't think all incumbents are charismatic."*

8.15.4 In relation to lay training, the interviewee says that in the Diocese *"there is quite a lot available"*, but *"it's actually persuading people who are often busy that they would really love to do it."* And travel time to participate in centrally run courses is one of the practical challenges.

9. INTERVIEWEE FROM KENT CONTEXT:

Interviewee (EM-K)

9.1 **Geographical and social context:**

9.1.1 The area in which interviewee is located is close to an urban area. The populations around its churches range from a small community of c. 284 up to a larger one of c. 2,000 people.

9.1.2 The interviewee notes that, traditionally, the context is *"Mostly rural their agricultural families go back for generations upon generations"* and that they have *"a real sense of ownership through having lived and worked for land"*, with a consequence that to *"go to that parish… otherwise it's just a foreign land to them."*

9.1.3 Socially speaking there are contrasts in that *"one of the parishes has got some very very rich, living in huge houses on top of the hill where the church is but down at the bottom of the hill is social housing, you couldn't get a wider variety"*. But change is also under way as: *"we've got a new housing estate growing up"* which *"could make quite a big difference to the, the feeling in the community."*

9.2 **Church Context**

9.2.1 The interviewee's church context is of 7 Church of England churches, in relation to which the interviewee comments *"the congregations mostly reflect the affluent end"* although a **Fresh Expressions** service *"attracts all sorts of people, you can get quite a wide variety of people there."*

9.2.2 Structurally speaking, the churches all have separate PCCs: *"I have been working for the last 14 months now trying to bring them into one PCC, in other words to go to a single parish unit as you can imagine it's not looked on favourably."* But a consequence of having alternate months for PCC meetings is *"that means for me seven lots of PCC meetings in one month"* in addition to which *"I meet the churchwardens and the treasurers separately"* and *"I meet with my lay ministers if I can do separately"* while also *"I have a school governing body meeting too"* in relation to which *"the pattern works reasonably."*

9.2.3 In terms of leadership, in addition to the interviewee, there is an associate priest (half time) and a curate in training. The team meets fortnightly. *"We have ended up with what I think I have been trying to create which is a team we call it the staff team, we call it the ministry leadership team and it has got three licensed clergy and three lay people."* There is also what the interviewee describes as *"this fantastic team of 11/12. It's probably 9 or 10 people who have actually got ALM."*

9.2.4 Nevertheless, *"I find I am so meetings orientated that I am worn out."*

9.3 Leadership and Training

9.3.1 The interviewee's view of leadership is *"facilitated leadership"* and *"people oriented"*. The interviewee also states that *"I love working in teams"*, although *"I do find the concept of a leader of a team quite discomforting so I think that's why I would say I am a team member but aware I am the ultimate leader."*

9.3.2 Put in a more developed way, *"transformational leadership in that I see there is potential for each member of the team, myself included, to grow together through recognising differences in one another and sort of recognition of differences helps us all to grow into our greater potential."*

9.3.3 In relation to the interviewee's current context, *"I think we are called much more to be managers you know"* because of *"the sheer logistics of trying to oversee 7 different communities."*

9.3.4 In terms of initial training, at the time this interviewee undertook it, *"I don't know that I was aware when I was training there were such things as multi-parish benefices"*. Now, however, the curate has *"a questionnaire that goes out to all curates and training incumbents and there is question which says applies, that everybody by the end of their curacy is adequately trained for multi-parish ministry"* although in the end the interviewee thinks that, *"you can't possibly understand what it's like to be in a multi-parish unless you're in it"* as there is a *"huge difference between being in a multi parish benefice than there is a single parish. Everything is different about it."*

9.3.5 In terms of continuing training, *"Opportunities to reflect with others have come up."* In the interviewee's Diocese, there is no system for this, but *"we have got the most fantastic ministry development officer"* who *"can actually listen and help you to find the answers somewhere within yourself, very different in having some sort of formal preparation or training."*

9.4 Changing Church Culture

9.4.1 *"If I was to ask the majority of people on a Sunday morning congregation in the seven churches, they would not want to think of themselves being united to the other 6"* but as a possible means of connecting with the individuality of the churches the interviewee said that although *"it is something I get challenged on almost weekly"* nevertheless, *"I resisted the idea of having focal ministers"* as *"creating problems for when they moved on."*

9.4.2 In relation to church expectations, it is *"very much the model of one little church where the vicar does everything"* which the interviewee sees as a *"a very infantilised view of who the leader was"* and *"really was the vicar as the leader doing everything even interceding. Not a lot there for people to be involved in, nodded their heads and said yes as appropriate, so I think there are quite a few of the people have been brought up in that way."*

9.4.3 However, now there are *"Sundays within the seven churches where the services are led completely by lay people and not a priest in sight"*. There are a number of lay people who are on the regular rota for doing collective worship in three local schools; *"there is a small outlet for healing ministry"*; and *"I have got lots of people involved in pastoral care and most of the churches have a separate Pastoral Care Team."*

9.4.4 In bringing about change it is important to bring into focus *"growing the fresh expressions which are going to be so important in our corporate life in the Church of England."*

9.5 **Whole Church Development Training**

9.5.1 The interviewee argues that the New Testament *"stands in complete opposition to the one official parish model where the vicar was expected to do everything"* and that *"baptism is our licence to minister not anything that we can necessarily get which says you know I have been through a course."*

9.5.2 In relation to the formal governance requirements for individual church officers *"The Diocese are very helpful in that they don't insist we have the full amount of people, we have to manage with just one churchwarden and no treasurer."* However, Lay people encouraged to engage with training and development *"Always by personal invitation"* and *"I can just see lay ministers growing in confidence all the time."*

9.5.3 There has been a history of Authorised Lay Ministers who experience a *"much lighter touch of training, raising awareness as opposed to equipping"*. Two have done an **Authorised Lay Ministry course for funeral ministry and bereavement ministry**. They assist with funerals and do follow up as well. Although with normal **ALM courses** anyone can attend if they are recommended by the incumbent, in relation to the specific **ALM course** *"you had to be selected to enter that course."*

9.5.4 Reflecting upon such courses, though, the interview recounted having been *"called upon to do a crash course for Readers….who were going to be asked to do funeral ministry and it consisted of two evening training sessions"* in relation to which *"I really felt I was colluding, providing a recipe for a partial car crash at some point. Because these people now feel they're fully qualified to go out and ruin people's lives"*…although at the same time recounted how one newly ordained deacon curate said he learnt *"more from me in one evening"* than in his entire College training.

9.5.5 Equipping people to preach is mainly done in house: *"Giving them the tools I suppose but then actually sitting with them….and then I would give them the opportunity, one of the churches to actually go to preach but before they did that I want to actually look through their sermon and discuss a little bit….then I would rota them with me and so I can reflect with them afterwards and eventually set them free to preach without my intervening."*

9.5.6 In relation to organising training for pastoral teams *"I found they are almost like trying to break into the flower arranger's cupboard, this is my domain and you don't touch it, it is working well as far as I know."*

9.5.7 On a broader lay level, **Deepening Discipleship** is a course run regularly in the Diocese and *"looks mostly at who you are yourself as a minister"* and *"I regularly send people on that with the encouragement of the Diocese"*, while locally they run their own **Lent courses** and **Advent courses**. The interviewee says they did also try **Alpha** which *"has been reasonably successful for here in this benefice before I got here"*…but *"the offshoot now from the **Alpha** course is that's now there is a group following the **Pilgrim** course, which we have found really useful."* **Lost for Words** was done eight years ago and *"it worked really well."*

9.5.8 Around the time of confirmation they organised a *"sort of **refresher course** and it was by magic really then people thought oh four sessions that's alright and we have got this…adult group some of whom will go forward to confirmation."*

10. INTERVIEWEES FROM NORTH YORKSHIRE CONTEXTS:

Interviewee (EM-NY1)

10.1 Geographical and social context

10.1.2 The area in which the interviewee is located surrounds and includes a small market town of c. 3,000 inhabitants, but includes a hamlet of only 150 people. The interviewee noted of one area round one church that it *"only received its electricity sort of five or six years ago"* and that *"most folk here they are either retired or they are involved in agriculture"*, while *"there is a lot of sort of underlying poverty."*

10.2 Church context

10.2.1 The interviewee's church context consists of 5 Church of England churches in what is, in practice, a single parish although technically it is one Benefice with two parishes. For c. 25 years 4 of the 5 churches have been involved and there was then a pastoral reorganisation scheme in which other 1 church left its parish and joined the original 4 churches.

10.2.2 Only 7 or 8 people are active in 4 of churches, of which three quarters are over 75, in relation to which the interviewee comments *"I'd like to hope that each of the five churches that I have care for can maintain a viable Christian presence for its community."* However, there is a problem with the *"age demographic"*, so that that *"within ten years that viable presence may have been kind of lost."* It may therefore be that *"that maintaining five active viable Christian communities has to change, and it becomes much more focused on one large one."*

10.2.3 Ecumenically, one of the churches has a good Methodist association although *"the Methodist Chapel sadly closed a few years ago but there is quite a strong, resident population of Methodist worshippers…. so we share quite a lot of our sort of worship and church activities together"* and, in fact, interviewee is of the view in relation to Methodists that *"in some ways they are kind of ahead of us on a sort of downward spiral rather than an upward one."*

10.2.4   In terms of leadership, *"It's not a kind of formalised team"*. There are two retired priests - one of whom is active - plus four Recognised Pastoral Assistants. These are *"lay people who have gone through a course of study and training and sort of acknowledgement through the Diocese, and you can opt for either Pastoral preference or worship preference within that scheme."* One of these assistants opted for a pastoral specialism and she oversees five or six visitors she and the interviewee meet with these recognised assistants to encourage and support them and to oversee the pastoral visiting. The other three focus on worship, in relation to which *"they are not lay Readers, they are not licensed but they are simply folk who have done a sort of relatively low level of training over about 10 weeks and they will assist me or they're able to lead evening prayer or Morning Prayer or a service of the word."*

10.2.5   In practice it's *"a bit fragile. It works until it doesn't kind of thing"* and *"Most Sundays I'm doing three services in three places. And long term….that's not really sustainable."*

10.3   Interviewee Leadership Style and Training

10.3.1   The interviewee says, *"I think I try to be an enabler. I try to teach and encourage others to take responsibility and I try not to micromanage things"*. So *"my style really is to try and kind of set people free and that brings its own kind of issues because sometimes people don't want to be set free…"*

10.3.2   Although *"I carry what I call my guilt list round with me….and I suspect most priests do"*, at the same time *"I recognise the future is not one Vicar running around like a headless chicken or one vicar in control of everything. I don't think that's healthy."*

10.3.3   In terms of initial training, that was done 20-25 years ago in a non-residential training, *"some of that kind of touched on this kind of model, but it didn't really focus"*. In relation to multi-church ministry specifically, the interviewee grew up in a rural parish *"so rural ministry is familiar to me but I think in growing up and in my training, I think the model kind of was most familiar with was, is like the old fashioned model of the Vicar leading his or her small Parish and knowing everybody, everybody knowing him or her and actually being able to see and to visit and to do everything, in sort of this old fashioned way."*

10.3.4   The interviewee noted the phenomenon of *"clergy burn out and stress"*, and with particular reference to rural multi-church ministry, *"Particularly I think in rural areas where you're managing I think five, six, ten diverse communities and I think the church, generally my experience is that it has not been very good to kind of support clergy in what they expect from us"* compared with supervision in other caring professions etc. *"I think often the Church of England hasn't really kind of focussed its investment of rural ministry which is a shame because predominantly….most of the Church of England is rural actually."*

10.3.5   In terms of continuing training, the interviewee did a general leadership course that focused not on rural but on *"leadership skills in general and I think that began to help me move from that old model"* and *"What I try to do is to take from it the things that I think are most valuable but also be open to slightly newer models of a collegial kind of working."* In relation to rural ministry continuing training, the interviewee did a *"rural ministry course"* of 3-4 days *"probably the first specifically rural leadership course that I'd come across…and I found that enormously helpful."*

10.3.6   In terms of lay ministry *"I think I would kind of want to encourage people to become aware of their own gifts for ministry. So it doesn't mean they all necessarily go off and be trained and get ordained at all….the vast majority won't be."* In contrast to this approach the interviewee said *"I think that sometimes priests and ministers can be guilty of disabling congregations for their own particular agendas."*

10.4   Changing Church Culture

10.4.1   *"I think clergy, priests, ministers kind of condone the old system if you'd like because they draw authority or power to themselves and I think sometimes congregations and clergy play games then."* However, last year the interviewee was involved in a Diocesan steering group of which he says *"I think we are feeling our way with how to support kind of rural ministry and lay ministry within that really."*

10.4.2   But in relation to numbers of people in the churches, *"I think they kind of expect me to have answers, I think they expect me to know where we are going and to kind of lead from the front so a kind of, kind of managing director, top of the pyramid type model of leadership….Rather than a more corporate shared responsibility and understanding."*

10.4.3   In order to tackle that it's *"a lot of quite slow and patient kind of work there with folk really…"* and a lot of such work is to do with people's expectations since *"because it's a rural area there's a lot of expectation that the Vicar has to do everything."* Especially in relation to pastoral visiting, the interviewee says *"I can try but with the best will in the world you just can't do all those things*."

10.4.4   But it is beginning to change with *"folk leading prayers, helping administer bread, wine, some of the recognised parish assistants do some preaching and some sort of sharing of words and thoughts that kind of thing."*

10.4.5   In terms of new developments there is also Messy Church with the Methodists once a month; holiday clubs; once a week Sunday school; and monthly coffee morning. As the interviewee says, *"You know there is hope there is a future it may not look like the past but that's OK."* Overall, change is *"slow and steady and I think sometimes people just want a quick fix."*

10.5   Whole Church Development Training

10.5.1   *"I think there's a long term process of educating on the ground with people."*

10.5.2   One of the parishes in which the interviewee works exemplifies the nature of the challenge because in that church *"people won't even get up to read a lesson. Not because I won't let them but because they won't have the confidence."*

10.5.3   At the same time, in relation to those coming to church one has to understand that *"I suspect many of them are tired, they've given most of their lives to church in one way or another and I think if you asked them are they optimistic about the future? I suspect most of them would be quite sad and worried that the church they have loved and built and given themselves to is kind of dying."* In such a context it is perhaps not surprising that *"I think they look for me for answers for leadership for guidance and to some extent I think that's justified I think it's just a question of how that is given to them really."*

10.5.4   In approaching all of this, the interviewee thinks that *"Clergy need to be a bit more humble…. and give their congregations chance to grow I think.,…within that I think then to help clergy discern potential leaders"* and that *"how you grow people into that confidence is patient work from the point of view of the leader"* of which work this interviewee thinks of it as *"a sort of incarnational ministry of presence"* in order to enable people *"to experience something of the love of God."*

10.5.5 The benefice was piloted as part of a *Learning Communities Project* called *Thrive Now* that worked for two years with a group of six people from the parish in which *"you could see that people were growing in terms of their own understanding of leadership"*. One of the unplanned by-products of this was a growth in confidence in which *"actually they learned almost in spite of themselves rather than because of it."*

10.5.6 The *Recognised Parish Assistants Programme* helped four people with *"basic kind of listening skills interactive communication skills"* and *"a little bit of pastoral care a little bit of sort of biblical theological underpinning."* In relation to more formalised courses, the interviewee felt that *"while they're good for some people I think it can be a bit daunting for other people"* and because of this *"its different grades I suppose at different stages of people journey."*

10.5.7 They are currently doing the *Pilgrim* course with 15 or 16 on it and *"what I have found is that people are growing in faith and in their confidence with God and sharing the Gospel"* and the interviewee hopes that maybe some of them might take the *Pilgrim* course back to the churches from which they come. The churches are also joining the *Germinate Leadership Programme* later this year.

10.5.8 In relation to such programme, *"my sense is that that it isn't one size fits all"* but rather, *"let's try something. If it works great, it might for now, for now it might work it might not work next year or it might."* The interviewee thinks that whatever is used *"it is about courage and confidence and getting people to think outside the box and all that kind of stuff."* In addition, when all else is said and done *"if you don't have a relationship then it's all just a waste of time as far as I'm concerned."*

10.5.9 In conclusion: *"It isn't really rocket science but it's slow patient work, I don't believe you can rush it. You know I don't have a magic wand and I don't have programme or a model or a scheme that I'm desperately trying to impose on these fives churches in next five years thinking that's the answer because I don't."*

Interviewee (MM-NY1)

10.6 Geographical and social context

10.6.1 The interviewee is located in a varied area of North Yorkshire in which the villages are quite spread out – ranging from a strongly agricultural village of c. 300 people, through a quite large and affluent village that has become a retirement village, to a commuter village, to a suburban village that does not quite connect with its urban area. On aggregate, the interviewee travels 7,000 miles per annum.

10.7 Church Context

10.7.1 The interviewee is in a large circuit of Methodist churches which replaced four previous ones: *"Before we came together as one large circuit it took in a large geographical area and outlying areas were rural areas and the inner areas are seen as very town-suburban areas."*

10.7.2 The interviewee works in 5 churches within the circuit, but engages with 6 communities because in the sixth location *"we brought the Methodist church that was closed there together with the Anglican church because we work quite close together in that village"*. In fact, *"the vicar and I work quite closely in the village together and the 'Christians in that community', and that's how we term ourselves in that small area."*

10.7.3   Although they have been organised as the large circuit for 4 years, the interviewee feels *"We are very early stages of this coming together"* and that *"at the moment I am finding it hard to get the….churches to come together and meet on an occasion – this is in part because of transport, in part because of age infirmity and in part because of security lines in those communities that they do not at all understand and are not clear about"* also *"putting services in one place is a challenge."*

10.7.4   In relation to structures, one is supposed to have a church steward and a church council to lead along with the minister, *"But in smaller village places it does not really work well"*, so despite the legal position *"you tend to…actually share all these together."*

10.7.5   In relation to the wider circuit *"I think there have been times and frustrations with such large structures. The concern is that the resources are focused on the larger churches. I think they operate despite it than because of it"* and *"Many of them see there is a lack of support from the larger structure and a lack of understanding on what rural ministry and rural worship and community is all about."* In order to address this sense, the interviewee recounts that, *"In one of the towns the superintendent moved out and took up some rural churches and because of that….they began to see a balance was being redressed and their concerns were being dealt with seriously and what was interesting was that they felt now they had a voice."*

10.8   Interviewee Leadership Style and Training

10.8.1   In relation to initial training, the interviewee recounted *"No specific training was offered when I was training. It was a very general training and I think we had **1 day of management course and leadership training**."*

10.8.2   In relation to in service training, the interviewee had generally speaking not gone on courses, but rather testifies that *"my work experience has helped me grow a lot"*, although noted having recently done a course on **Managing Conflict**. Even more recently *"I have done a training course on **Spiritual Development**"* which gives opportunities for to *"step back and reassess things, talk to people and recognise how difficult and stressful it can get"* and *"that feeling of isolation and that feeling of it all resting on my shoulders and sharing with them my experiences"* . In relation to this the interviewee said, *"I found it very beneficial 1 day a month to have the permission – the permission is the big word – to go and do it"*. What the interviewee would have liked would have been a *"**specific training on …. larger circuits** that are a mixture of rural and suburban areas"*, especially if spread over a couple of years and run from an accessible location.

10.8.3   Such a training would be helpful because exercising leadership in a rural multi-church group such as this, *"It is a bit of a juggler"*, not least because *"each church is different from the other and obviously there are a lot of things that are dissimilar and obviously each church is made from different people with different skills and feels like that they have different ministries to each other"* and *"what would be your expectations from your minister and listen to that and each church has different sets of expectation."* But here the reality is: *"I have six responsibilities in addition to the circuit responsibilities and if I am going to try everything then I am going to go under and that will do nobody any good and so, let's just explore what it is like now, where you are up to now, what you feel you will be up to in the next few years – actually it is not even actually to do with whatever how many years, but within each year."*

10.9   **Changing Church Culture**

10.9.1   The interviewee's works from the basic approach that *"I would like to empower my communities"* and *"It is a very collaborative relationship. When we hit a problem we ask each other about their ideas and solutions and tend to try together to address our challenges."* This is the right approach because *"At the end of the day 5-6 years on I will move on. If I disempower them and make all the decisions, that could be it"*. At the same time, sometimes *"people are not able to do that"* or *"because of their circumstances cannot do this"*, and such cases the interviewee asks them *"do you want me to make a decision for you?"*

10.9.2   Overall, of the people in the churches *"They are very lovely human beings and Godly individuals – regardless of the levels of their spirituality. Their knowledge is God. They must be loved, cared for and treated with respect and a sense of humour"* since *"growing and working as an appointed leader is not given, you need to be ready and prepared to receive from the people as well."*

10.9.3   The interviewee seeks to build up those in the churches by working from the basic insight that, *"I am not in that village 24/7 but they are"* and *"When you are living in a village people are often watching you and often judging you by the words you say in a shop, how you treat your neighbour etc."*

10.10   **Whole Church Development**

10.10.1 *"We give them a choice and ask them; would you like to give it try? We also tell them there is support if need."* Generally then, in relation to someone who might be offering to take up a role such as that of church steward, *"I sit down with them and I work them through.* Formal training is offered *"but I find that many of them do not go – some do."*

Interviewee (EM-NY2)

10.11   **Geographical and social context:**

10.11.1 The Interviewee is located in an area of eight and half miles from one end to the other, with a population of around 2,000. The smallest village has c. 100 people and the largest c. 350

10.11.2 Socially it is very mixed, with farmers, a large proportion of retired people in some villages and the interviewee says *"a lot of young professional families have moved in"* for commuting. Also, that while *"every village has affluent areas"* it is also the case that *"pockets of rural poverty are there but you need to know where to look."*

10.12   **Church context**

10.12.1 The interviewee works in 7 Church of England churches coming from what were historically four parishes that have, for 20-30 years, been formally united as two groups. The interviewee arrived three and a half years ago to find they were a group that had been together for 7 years.

10.12.2 In terms of structures, *"the structures that the Church has given me"* are *"really unwieldy"*, since every church technically has a PCC or some daughter churches a District Church Council, *"so thinking about actually working as a group, any decision that you want to take takes 6 meetings to make that decision."* The interviewee's evaluation of this is that *"It just doesn't*

work" and so "hopefully in the coming year or so the PCCs will delegate certain things" to the **Church Representatives Group** because "every church having its own PCC is just ridiculous completely unwieldy and unworkable" and joint group has "got to have some delegated responsibility they can't just do talking shop."

10.12.3 In terms of leadership, as well as the interviewee there is another full time stipendiary incumbent; a colleague who works for the Diocese but is licensed for this group; some retired clergy; a part-time non-Stipendiary curate; and "lay people doing different roles." There are also some Lay leaders now called Recognised Parish Assistants and some Worship Leaders. "When I got here there was a leadership team of people who take services and that used to meet every two months or so", but various people had "been doing it for a long time" and decided to step down "so that particular group rather lost its focus."

10.12.4 A quarterly churchwardens meeting has now been established for Wardens from each of the churches, although occasionally parishes send someone else to the meeting. This is intended to be "looking at bigger picture stuff" in terms of "shared ownership over the whole group…and talking about missions and where the opportunities are". They also have a quarterly Worship Leaders meeting although none of this has yet had a full year's cycle of working. Nevertheless, the interview summarises that, "for me it's about enabling the Lay people to take more leadership."

10.13   Interviewee Leadership Style and Training

10.13.1 In initial training there was a one week **module on Leadership and Management** while in curacy training there were "bits and pieces that are spread over three or four years."

10.13.2 Overall, in relation to leadership, the interviewee says "I suppose the concept of servant leadership is what I aspire to" which is one of "enabling and encouraging" and that understanding that "I can't have control over everything because there's just too much to control, so I see my role as very much identifying people's gifts, giving them what they need to make use of it and asking them please to make your spirit free."

10.13.3 "I think some of my congregations really want me to do everything" but there is also "quite a high proportion of people who recognise that that model does not work anymore and they want to help and they want to get involved" In relation to change "It's happened quite organically I think, its taking time, I wouldn't have expected it to have taken three years to set up a team."

10.13.4 The interviewee did a **Leadership Course based on Benedictine spirituality** last year which was spread through residential sessions throughout the year, with a lot of small group discussion, reflection and prayer together, which was "really good" and "gave me quite a lot of time to reflect on how I actually wanted things to be organised."

10.14   Changing Church Culture

10.14.1 There is now lay involvement in readings, the Chalice at communion, taking the service up to the peace

10.15   Whole Church Development

10.15.1 "I think what's really needed is for people to realise that it's not the vicar who's the professional religious person and everybody else just sits there. It's about everybody taking responsibility for their own discipleship and for sharing their faith and building up other people."

10.15.2   In relation to a **diocesan course** that the interviewee sent lay people on, people were coming back and saying that it *"was a bit rubbish but have made some very good friends and connections with people on the course"* in relation to which the interviewee observed, *"I think the course has been designed as a one size fits all and they needed a course leader that could adapt to the needs and experience of the group."*

10.15.3   More broadly speaking, the interviewee thinks that *"The key to all churches is having really good lay leadership and actually training people up to be the catechists who can be teaching people the basics of the faith"*; also that *"being trained in listening well is really important for lay ministry"*; that perhaps the Order of Deacons should be extended; and that working in an informally supportive way in pairing people up *"yes mentor is a good word for it"* is a good way forward."

Interviewee (MM-NY2)

10.16   Geographical and social context

10.16.1   The interviewee is located in a *"very remote"* Dales area with *"quite isolated challenging roads, lots of sheep"* where in some villages, people have *"three generations in the graveyard and three generations living"*, but at the same time *"the community dynamic has changed so much with the holiday cottages, retired people moving in"* etc.

10.16.2   For those who have been in the area for a long time, *"the horizons are very different"* with Sheffield as *"another world"* even though it is only a couple of hours away and in relation to the *"logistics of living in the rural….you have to be very good at planning…if you haven't got a car it's a huge challenge."*

10.17   Church context

10.17.1   The interviewee – who is a Superintendent - works in a circuit with a total of around 350 members in 16 Methodist local churches, of which the interviewee looks after 8 local churches and the interviewee's colleague looks after the other 8. One local church is by far the biggest with around 120 members, with the next in size around 40, and then quite a number of chapels with only 6 or 8 members. There are also several chapels that have closed and which the local people are responsible ultimately for selling but, in between, for paying insurance etc.

10.17.2   And of some of these churches, the interviewee says *"a lot of the small ones have very little going on in the week apart from just a Sunday service"* in which *"the purpose of the Sunday service is sometimes….you get the collection, if we don't have a service we don't get the collection rather than, say, we are gathering to worship God."*

10.17.3   A retired minister is working also in the circuit while the other minister is away for a period and *"we liaise an awful lot generally at the staff meeting every five six weeks"* with phone liaison in between. There is also a wider team of about 8-10 people in terms of stewards, and an administrative assistant who meet around once a quarter and who *"kind of play to each other's skills."*

10.17.4   The interviewee comments that *"the chapel stewards tend to be, can act in a way…as a lay pastoral of the local chapel"* and *"they are my communication channel really and they know they come to me if they need some help or support or whatever it might be"*, although a number are

from Baptist backgrounds *"who come from the church position where there is one pastor, one church and that's the only way the church can grow."*

10.17.5 In terms of the multi-church context, the interviewee says *"what we are trying to do as a circuit is to encourage the sharing of services"* and we are *"trying to group them into clusters."* But often feels that it is *"quite insular….you know it can be quite a closed community"*. In terms of Methodist chapels, among the small chapels *"some are willing to work together"* and the circuit has a circuit service day once a quarter. Nevertheless, *"it's a challenge to get them to share and one that we are constantly working on."*

10.17.6 But in villages where there are also Anglican churches, in terms of sharing *"virtually all of it depends….on the local bishop in the diocese"* and so it is *"quite complicated but on the ground in the local villages everyone knows what they are doing and they want to work together."*

10.18 Interviewee Leadership Style and Training

10.18.1 In initial training, the interviewee felt that *"I had been inducted with inner city urban perspectives"* but that *"the rural population have the same challenges but don't have the same resources to meet the problem."* At the same time, the interviewee did have a **rural placement**.

10.18.2 In terms of leadership style, when the interviewee first started out as a minister they said *"it's like leadership from within"*. But now, it feels as if *"it takes so long for anybody to agree anything"* and this is because *"rural life is very different to the speed with which other people live."*

10.18.3 Overall, *"I guess I hold the authority"* but *"I hold it lightly."*

10.18.4 In terms of in-service training, the interviewee did have the opportunity to participate in leadership training but could not take it up at the time. Now, the interviewee thinks that a course in something like **conflict management** could be helpful but often there isn't time and *"it's sad but more chapels probably have to close before we can generate more space…"* in order that it will be possible to *"do some mission and vision maybe more proactively than currently I feel we are doing."*

10.19 Changing Church Culture

10.19.1 The interviewee says that many of the chapels with small memberships are *"kind of hanging on by the skin of their teeth, so it's very much maintenance rather than mission often or mission not as we know it"* and that it is *"easier to move the pews out of the church than people out of the pews"* even though *"I haven't managed to move any of the pews out of the churches yet."*

10.19.2 In terms of participation, among many of the longstanding members, the interviewee says *"it's quite an art to get them comfortable to say anything"*. There is also a challenge that *"the communities changed an awful lot but the chapel hasn't"* and also, within the congregations different approaches can be taken by long-established families and 'newcomers' resulting in considerable tensions.

10.19.3 The interviewee says that what is being done often *"feels like palliative care"* and quite a number of people in the churches are carrying a lot of hurt about *"a kind of failure of….life's work with the church, so it is a pastoral need that you have to go and sit and spend some time with…"*

10.19.4 Some new energy is derived from engaging with primary school children Assemblies in the area where the interviewee helps them to *"sort their own Assemblies out"* and that is something that the parents see and, through it, *"see that the church is alive"*. But many in the chapels don't see this: *"They are just tired so in a way I am responsible for being their energy."*

10.20 **Whole Church Development**

10.20.1 In relation to steward training *"more often than not it's an hour drive away so not only do they have to be willing to receive it they have to be willing and keen enough to travel to it."* In relation to online options there is a problem often with rural broadband. So the interviewee says *"The only way I would suggest is local delivery in local places to small numbers of local people which is very costly in time and travel wise"*, but might be done by *"kind of pyramid it down."*

10.20.2 In relation to questions about the present and the future, the interviewee says *"none of these questions were even asked before I came….and I think they should have been asking them 10-15 years ago…so maybe it's up to somebody else to get the answers. Whether we have enough time to receive the answers I don't know. It's in God's hands, isn't it?"*

Interviewee (MM-NY3)

10.21 **Geographical and social context**

10.21.1 The interviewee is located in an area that is a mixture of rural and non-rural, where the rural parts of mainly arable agricultural land. But there is also a lot of retired people and also quite a few young people who have houses from which they commute to more urban areas and *"there is hidden poverty in the area."*

10.22 **Church context**

10.22.1 The interviewee works in the rural part of the Methodist circuit, with responsibility for 8 of the 23 churches in the circuit, of which an attendance of 35 is the largest and 10 is the smallest.

10.22.2 The interviewee comments that *"We have been advised to make the areas bigger"* but there are *"a lot of controversies about whether it is good or not."*

10.22.3 Transport *"is a problem for rural staff"* – because *"most of the meetings are in town and there is only one bus per day."*

10.23 **Interviewee Leadership Style and Training**

10.23.1 The interviewee says that *"throughout my theological training, I had absolutely no training on how to work in a rural area."* Although in continuing training *"I did a little course run by ARC"* - just a weekend one - for ministers who want to go to rural areas."

10.23.2 The interviewee is an Evangelist also with considerable rural church ministry experience but comments that in relation to the experience of growth, *"the more churches you get the more difficult it becomes"*. But, *"I thought I will dream the dream and we will do it together and I went to all the churches and said that to them. The people in return told me that they wanted more people coming to church."*

10.23.3 The interviewee, as part of their training, did an MA in Rural Ministry at the University of Wales and comments that *"The Methodist Church could not manage it without local preachers"*, in relation to which *"there is tremendous crowd and they all respond when there is an emergency situation."*

10.23.4 The interviewee says *"I have always put a lot of emphasis on quality worship"* within which, in relation to church people, *"I talk to them as I talk to you and I do not preach to them"* and that *"it is much easier to preach in the countryside. Jesus was a countryside lad."*

10.23.5 In relation to weddings and funerals etc., people expect a "professionalism" because *"they want to be safe on those occasions....especially on funerals."*

10.23.6 *"I want to be upfront because I want to sell the best news I have ever heard"*.

10.24 **Changing Church Culture**

10.24.1 The interviewee says that *"The wonderful thing about this particular pattern is that because there are so many churches...they would run themselves because there is no other way"* and *"sometimes you feel like a spare part."*

10.24.2 There is often local working with the Anglican Church but unlike the Anglican Church, *"there has never been a culture of having a rural Methodist minister"*. But *"if you ask the ministers they would say an average of four churches would be the ideal number."* However, *"*40% of the Methodist churches are rural and we are not getting the services and resources required."*

10.24.3 The interviewee stresses that, *"I want the church to be an integral part of the community. I think in general most of the Methodist churches have caught this message"*, and that *"I have been here for 20 months and we have welcomed 10 new members and I would have liked it to be greater but it has not been."*

10.24.4 *"The people want to see that things are working...once they open up the shop and see that good things are going on, they get enthusiastic"* as, for example, in using a church building for play days and events for parents and children in which ways *"we developed a lot of relationships."* They then developed a monthly music dance service which saw congregations grow from c. 20 to c. 80 people. And all of this developed out from *"just one lady being inspirational."* Sometimes, with advertising, they got over 200 people to be involved.

10.24.5 Other activities led by lay people, include coffee mornings, community lunches and youth groups.

10.25 **Whole Church Development**

10.25.1 There is a leadership team *"that co-ordinates any training or activities such as safeguarding etc."*

10.25.2 In relation to lay involvement as a Methodist the interviewee says *"I think it is in our DNA"* and *"when people ask me about my visions, I tell them I want to empower the lay people to be where they want to be"* and the interviewee would say it's important that *"we just dreamed the dream."*

10.25.3 The lay preachers have 2-3 years training and *"we do run from time to time training on pastoral methods and have courses available at District level and we would ask people to go on Safeguarding which is a big thing in the Methodist Church."* There is also **training for stewards**, **training for preachers** and **training for lay people in family and youth**. A lot of them have done it at circuit level and a lot of them have done it at District level. There is also a **missionary ministry course** of a year in length, which includes a once a month residential and is delivered jointly with Anglicans.

10.25.4 More generally, *"The people have a variety of options on courses and they choose what they want to study."* Indeed, *"if we do not run course in Methodism, we often turn to Anglicanism to latch on with these trainings."* In fact, the interviewee comments that *"a lot of courses are now run jointly"*. The interviewee has also done **Alpha** (although *"it is a bit posh"*), but had also done the **Start course**.

10.25.5 *"If the gifts are there we will notice them, we will find them and support them. We find courses for them and ask them to go on them. Lay ministry is very important to us and we understand that we will have lots of problems without them."* And because of this, it is funded by the district and circuit levels unless someone can make a contribution.

10.25.6 In relation to the training on offer, *"I think it is eventually down to the people, if nothing else they want some good ideas."* Overall, *"You know along the way some things will die and you also hope that something will carry on and so to get to set up the leadership that carries on when you are gone."*

11. INTERVIEWEE FROM SHROPSHIRE CONTEXT:

Interviewee (EM-Sh)

11.1   Geographical and social context

11.1.1 The interviewee is located in an area that includes of 6 villages, of which 2 are quite wealthy and 1 is a commuter village, ranging in population from 350/400 inhabitants to just over 1,000 of which the interviewee states that *"vast majority are retired"*, although there are three schools.

11.1.2 In terms of social mix, the area is described as consisting of a *"mixture of middle class commuters, farmers and a really old council estate"*, while one village is a *"feudal community."* In terms of transport interviewee says that, *"buses are non-existent for all but a couple of my villages."*

11.2   Church context

11.2.1   The interviewee works in what are 6 Church of England parishes, which were originally organised as three groups, each of 2 two churches. The active congregations range from 10-11 to 15-20, sometimes up to 25, occasionally 40 people.

11.2.2   Structurally, there 6 individual PCCs managing their own buildings and finances and the Interviewee was of the view that "I *don't believe there was a strategic reason for putting themselves together*" but "*I imagine it was just needs must*" in the context of "*more pressure on clergy numbers.*"

11.2.3   In terms of leadership, there is a team of around 10 people, meeting monthly, with one member elected to the team from each PCC. As the interviewee explains, when he arrived this team was not working: "*they were busy discussing the rota*", so he had to remind them that: "*we're here to do leadership, let's lead please*" noting that "*the idea was in place but I had to make it work because it wasn't working really.*"

11.2.4   Now "*there is a structure and a way of working and everybody is happy with that. At least nobody is moaning anyway.*" The leadership team's purpose now is to "*sort of discuss vision, take it back to the PCC and we bring it back to discuss further if there's anything controversial. But on the whole, if it's to do with ministry as long as it fits with what they're already doing there's never any issue.*"

11.3   Interviewee Leadership Style and Training

11.3.1   The interviewee expressed a preference for "*collaborative leadership*" explaining that "*I'm happy to lead but I'm not happy to dictate*" and "*I'm very good at encourage lay involvement but I also give a degree of leadership as well*" and "*I'm good at leading people even if I'm not always a good person to lead a project.*"

11.3.2   The interviewee's leadership aim was expressed as "*I'm here to equip people to do the stuff and do it with them not for them*" and that "*I see myself as getting this benefice working so they don't need me*" The style is "*relaxed and informal*" and the interviewee is "*passionate about finding people who can do things with me*" though "*there are certain things that I just get on do, if I have to do a funeral I just get on and do it.*"

11.3.4   The interviewee's initial leadership training was "*part of a theology degree and on placement*", while in relation to continuing training, they had done "*bits here*" including "*a leadership course in the Diocese.*" But, "*I think I was modelled at an early age*" in that from working early on with a colleague "*I learnt more about how not to do things because he was very driven*" and so now is, "*trying to be collaborative and trying to share leadership and give set direction with vision and then enable the ministry of whose who might fulfil it.*"

11.3.5   In relation to rural multi-church ministry specifically, "*I did my curacy in a mixture of suburban and rural*" but in relation to a rural area, "*never lived in one which I think is a key thing*". In continuing training, the interviewee had done "*a leadership in rural ministry type course*" with the Arthur Rank Centre of which the interviewee said: "*rural ministry course is very good*".… "*more about the reality of rural life…..than it was about particularly leadership strategies.*" It helped to address the sense of: "*Help I'm in rural ministry and I haven't done this much.*"

11.4 **Changing Church Culture**

11.4.1 *"My three predecessors here all last four years and all had some sort of mental health issues"* and therefore *"we negotiated a very clear understanding of how things would be"* before arrival so that *"they didn't want me to come and look after their buildings and sort all their finances out."*

11.4.2 In relation to change, *"When I go with a suggestion…..they'll engage with it because they don't see me as somebody who's constantly trying to change what matters to them."* Thus, for example, *"I certainly wouldn't change worship without any discussion."* Nevertheless, the interviewee feels that it is the case that, *"people are scared of change"* and there is an issue of *"culture self-esteem"* in a couple of villages. That comes as a result of *"years of being told they're hopeless by one of the members really"* even though *"There are lots of things they can do without me but I tend to pop in from time to time just so that they know that I still think about it and it matters to me and I appreciate what they are doing."*

11.4.3 Despite this, there are *"lots of people who in some of our churches will read lessons and two or three of the churches do prayers, the sort of functional things and practical jobs there's people at all the churches that do those"* and there is a *"flourishing youth group who lead services and you know preach"* while *"in the last two years we've got another three or four people who now help lead worship in church on a Sunday and we're working towards key qualifications with them."*

11.4.4 *"It's the same with pastoral work, we've set up teams to do it and the agreement is that there's a person heads up in each church"* although *"there is still a sort of residue amongst you know 'oh the Church haven't been'…'yes they have'…'no they haven't' what they mean is the Vicar hasn't been."*

11.5 **Whole Church Development**

11.5.1 In relation to recognised lay leadership *"I've got two people close to being licensed as lay ministers which means they have the Bishop's permission to lead worship"* in relation to which the interview reports that the Bishop said *"I'm happy with what you're doing it's just if it goes pear shaped you'll get kicked up the backside whereas if they're licensed I'll get kicked."*

12. INTERVIEWEES FROM SOMERSET CONTEXTS

Interviewee (UM-So)

12.1   Geographical and social context

12.1.2   The interviewee is located in a relatively large, and in many ways diverse rural area.

12.2   Church context

12.2.1   The interviewee works as an "associate minister" across 5 United Reformed churches which have been together for c. 20 years. The interviewee notes that the group was *"brought together mainly to share ministry, but it had quite a number of ministers in its early days"* and that one church was "initially very resistant to being part of the group" although *"they are now identified as a group and relate as a group."*

12.2.2   Structurally, *"the group governance is that there is a group committee that consists of 2 representatives from each of the churches, but anyone can go to it and it meets quarterly."* There is also a finance group, and a property group.

12.2.3   In terms of leadership across the group, in addition to the minister and associate minister, there is a retired Baptist minister and his wife who are both lay preachers, and also a retired URC minister. A lay woman secretary meets with the 2 ministers and does the preaching plan covering around 5 people who preach regularly across the group.

12.2.3   But it is challenging for *"an Associate minister ministering in a group of five churches that have a well-established minister of 10 years, or 8 years when I arrived, who is used to doing those churches on his own"* and that *"he was so well established and he's in pastoral charge so officially he still chairs all meetings and he does all the pastoral visiting."* They *"are meant to be working collaboratively"* but *"team working is not what I would've envisaged"* and although *"some of that is the distance between us, in that we just don't meet often enough"* also" the *Synod has put a Synod staff member in as a facilitator to help us work together as a team."*

12.2.4 *"20 months in it feels like it was a good idea to solve a deployment problem…and it was exciting in terms of the blank sheet of paper but I don't think particularly well thought through in terms of what it would actually look like."*

12.2.5 The number of elders varies in different churches from 1 to 6. The interviewee said that, with the exception of perhaps 1 church, *"I don't think most of the Churches in this group fulfil the governance structure"* although in relation to governance issues the interviewee was of the view that *"there's enough recognition in the wider church that this is a universal problem, that it doesn't feel like a pressure it feels like it's a shared "heck, what are we going to do?"* Nevertheless, despite the lack of some formally recognised local leaders *"the churches all have fairly strong if idiosyncratic, ermm, lay people who basically run the show."*

12.2.6 One local church has decided to merge with a Methodist one to form a Local Ecumenical Partnership, with both churches having 25-30 members, although there is an issue in relation to this: *"but it's not about theology, it's not about church life, it's another part of my family go to the Methodist church and I didn't speak to them for 20 years so and you think grow up will you".*

12.3 Style of Leadership and Training

12.3.1 *"My leadership style is to make sure it actually happens so follow up from meetings you know if the meeting decides something"* because *"it is important to me that something, there's an outcome, yes."*

12.3.2 *"I do think I can delegate but as soon as someone lets me down I am not so good at delegating to them again."*

12.3.3 In relation to initial training and its relevance to multi-church ministry *"Apart from the **internship year** I am not sure any of it had relevance to ministry at all really"*, although *"the placements were the strongest bit in terms of practical learning."*

12.3.4 In terms of continuing ministerial training needs, *"I am really grateful to the URC that they are generous with their CME grants, except they've halved it"*. In relation to rural multi-church ministry specifically: *"I've done the Arthur Rank rural ministry… and that was really quite helpful….I can't crystallise out for you what was helpful about it, I think it was more resources for rural ministry."*

12.3.5 In relation to future training needs, in relation to ordained ministers, *"I find it really difficult to see what the role of a traditional ministry is"* and *"we need missionaries rather than ministers… People who can make connections with culture."*

12.4 Changing Church Context

12.4.1 From their wider Church experience, the interviewee asks *"hasn't the church moved or grown in the thirty years I've been bashing my head against a brick wall?"* explaining that, *"I don't like discussions"* and because a preference for action rather than discussion, notes that: *"I have actually felt much more comfortable in Evangelical context because they are more likely to make this happen rather than talk about it."*

12.4.2 Nevertheless, broadly speaking, the interviewee feels encouraged that there is now much more *"awareness of feminist philology, reader response criticism, the spirituality movement…. narrative preaching…use of the senses, so I think it is changing but I'm not sure in time for the churches."*

12.4.3   In relation to the group's expectation of ministers, the interviewee thinks that because they have been working as a group for c. 20 years, *"they have stopped expecting so from my perspective they could run themselves and I'm not sure they need ministers anymore"* and in any case the interviewee finds matters difficult because *"I'm not bedded into any of the communities and therefore I'm finding it really difficult to even get to know people in the church"* and so *"I don't know how you get close enough to love them when you're this spread as it were."*

12.4.4   Originally, the idea held by the interviewee was *"that it would be more like a pioneer development minister and that we would .....identify 2 or 3 community oriented projects that I might engage with"*. What is done is now two drop ins at a Food Bank and a session a week at an Anglican pioneer initiative.

12.4.5   In terms of the local churches *"I would like to see a presiding local leader/Elder who has a sacramental ministry in each community. But then I don't know how you deal with the power broking that that sometimes leads to."*

12.5   **Whole Church Development**

12.5.1   In terms of leadership *"it does feel like the training that's on offer is on things like safeguarding and you know sort of worship leading because were short of pulpit supply....But it's not about what does it mean to follow Christ in your everyday life rather than having an hour's respite on a Sunday morning from the pressures of life."*

12.5.2   But *"there's locally recognised people and who might have done an old course or whatever and not willing to do more....or just refuse to do the course but have got some kind of theological background so it's been accepted by Synod"* and then there are those who are Accredited by the General Assembly who have either done the **Training for Learning and Serving (TLS)** two year discipleship plus one year course, or one of its predecessors. The interviewee comments that *"TLS is a fantastic course but I think they've actually made the bar too high....we need something between TLS light and TLS, we need a TLS assessed and a TLS that is the basic discipleship thing and perhaps it needs to be delivered more locally."*

12.5.3   In terms of other training, the interviewee says: *"I quite often signpost them to something"* including options such as **Keswick**, **Christian Resources Exhibition** etc. More broadly **Emmaus** has been used of which the interviewee says *"I have found that quite helpful.... because I like the fact that it starts from the education, from people's experience and moves towards whatever."* The interviewee had also looked at things like **Essence**, although they had tended to use away days more, noting that *"**Away Elders Days** in particular I think has been helpful."*

12.5.4   *"I think I've grown more and more convinced that **individual mentoring and discipling** is significant"* and so *"I'm into **Alpha**...and I'm into **Messy Church** because not because of the content but because of the format, the informality, the space for open conversation around food."*

Interviewee (EM-So)

12.6   **Geographical and social context**

12.6.1   The interviewee is located in an area over 100 square miles with a population of around 2,500. The area is "deeply rural" with a lot of small hill farming of sheep and cattle. *"A lot of people... are related to each other going back a long way"* and *"hunting is everywhere ...hunting is part of our identity."* There is also tourism with farms diversifying into bed and breakfast.

12.7   Church context

12.7.1   The interviewee works in 8 Church of England churches that have been grouped together for c. 5 years and notes that *"In my lifetime there were 7 rectors in the benefice."*

12.7.2   *"I'm very clear to everyone we are benefice because of financial pressures. We are trying to make the best of this thing and I' trying to make the best of it and you are, so, honesty, openness."*

12.7.3   In terms of leadership, priest works with a Lay Reader and an ordinand *"and I would say we meet monthly, it's not rigid....I feel that what I offer is freedom and maturity, that I don't offer is a lot of fuss or doing things because I think they should."* In working with these people, the interviewee seeks to make it *"very clear what I want to find with you is the right answer in this situation, not my answer, my preference."*

12.8   Interviewee Leadership Style and Training

12.8.1   In initial terms *"My training was basically a degree in theology which was brilliant training"* but *"I don't know if I would be selected these days and in another way I feel in a non-arrogant way I am utterly of the Church of England."*

12.8.2   *"I don't start with models of leadership or anything....I feel it's a huge privilege that I have been allowed to follow my heart and be a rector and be allowed to follow that journey"*, while in terms of continuing training *"I would say a lot of what comes out of the diocese is based on assumptions and a perspective which simply do not exist here"* but that *"I would say the training I have had has been from the people of this place."*

12.8.3   The interviewee recalls that Bishop saying: *"remember people's name, visit them at home and keep reading"* and *"when I started here "I thought I am going to do that and see what happens"*, but *"If you want to preside over growth and show the church that you are a really good leadership candidate you will annoy people here and fail."*

12.8.4   *"Here the thing is to have confidence in your role that you can relax and be the priest"* and that *"The basic approach of my ministry is when people make a request I say yes."*

12.9   Changing Church Context

12.9.1   In relation to the church structures, the interviewee feels that, *"If you made one PCC in this benefice it would be misery. It would be like Europe. Because they all move at different levels, I go to each place to listen."*

12.9.2   The interviewee is reflecting on what the pioneering approach of *"working towards a new distinct group with the marks of church"* might mean for one of the churches in this group where *"the maximum attendance is 4 in a good wind and one of the four is moving away"*. In relation to that *"I'd heard about the festival church model but I disliked that model as it seems to be planning for decline"* But using events like the end of lambing etc. to gather people for such as a *"summer festival"* could be viable and *"I think the festival is key to the sustainability of the church."*

12.9.3   But the interviewee also thinks that continuing to engage with very traditional rural matters such as hunting is important, and that given its place in his local communities *"I want to associate my love of the church with what they love as flexibly as possible"* so that, *"Yesterday I went to the [...] fox and hounds"* to see puppies identified for the puppy show: *"A very local gathering so I think that is a chaplaincy role within the wider thing of that group."*

12.10   Whole Church Development Training

12.10.1   The interviewee worked with *Exploring Christianity* in an ad hoc way.

13. INTERVIEWEE FROM STAFFORDSHIRE CONTEXT:

Interviewee (EM-St)

13.1 Geographical and social context

13.1.2 The interviewee is located in an area that is composed of 3 very distinct communities, although *"all three of the churches and communities there are all linked by the canals"*. The area is described by the interviewee as *"a lovely place to go for a walk"* although at the same time as being *"amorphous"* and *"like a place without a soul"* with a *"scattering of homes"*. Socially the area receives quite a lot of international visitors, but for residents the profile is quite asset rich and cash poor.

13.2 Church context

13.2.1 The interviewee works among 3 Church of England churches. The culture is such that in relation to each church, people in the area *"see it as theirs even if they don't necessarily want to be there very often."*

13.2.2 They are not a legal benefice, so there are three separate PCCs, each with separate wardens, treasurers, secretary, although in one church *"in many ways the PCC and the congregation are almost the same"*. As interviewee comments, *"they are kind of their own entities"*; it's *"pretty strange in that sense there's not a whole lot that unites them apart from me"* and *"I have been the common link between the three."*

13.2.3 Although *"we sometimes have joint PCCs to explore things"* the interviewee explains that: *"I didn't feel it was appropriate to try and force them into eh an imposed structure"*. This was because that had been attempted in the 1970s and *"all hell broke loose"*. Rather, *"I was successful in getting them all together for a full conference day"* and *"we've always tried to offer educational stuff as a unit"* and the *"parish magazine ever since I've been here has served all three churches."*

13.3.4 Matters have, in fact, gone as far as *"we actually put together a unit, erm, mission statement"* but all of this is within what interviewee describes as *"a spirit of co-operation and helpfulness"* because *"I don't think they would want to kind of get it any closer than that because the communities geographically quite separate."*

13.3.5 In terms of the leadership of ministry, together with the interviewee there is an Associate Minister and a Reader, and they are forming a new pastoral care team. But it has proved difficult to identify two Wardens for each of the small churches.

13.4 **Interviewee Leadership Style and Training**

13.4.1 *"I see very much see myself as a truly collaborative person I enjoy people. My theology about ministry is that from baptism each one of us is a minister"* and so *"I get fed up with the Church of England for their licensing services they use the word Minister with a capital M."*

13.4.2 In relation to initial training preparation for multi-church ministry it was *"probably zero"* because *"when I was doing my initial year …. there was absolutely nothing that was offered of a way of recognising that ministry and needs are process that different when it comes to rural."*

13.4.3 However, the interviewee went on to explain that: *"I'm one that very much values ongoing ministry development"* and had been on a **course on creative leadership.**

13.4.4 In relation to training with regard to multi-church ministry, realistically, *"just the way life is, whatever training you have, when come into a particular place you know it's not necessarily going to be covered 100%"*. However, the interviewee had been on an **Arthur Rank Centre training programme (Germinate Leadership)** which *"is the only one that has been thinking about the development of leadership in the rural context so this was an eighteen month commitment."* Reflecting on this, the interviewee summarised that the programme had been a *"really special experience to just think but intentionally and creatively about you know how I am trying to act with regards to leadership"* and that: *"through the programme you know are quite a number of quite unique dimensions to ministry in a rural place that are simply not the case elsewhere."*

13.5 **Changing Church Culture**

13.5.1 The interviewee explained that *"I think for some ministry is basically what ordained people do to them haha"* giving the example that *"The previous vicar even played the organ haha at all three churches."*

13.5.2 In terms of change, *"it's slow and that's the thing when-when I first came I didn't realise how slow it would be and I was probably jumping the gun by making assumptions"* and so *"when I came I was very gung-ho about being able to do some of those things there was huge resistance."* The interviewee has now recognised that *"from a leadership and a process point of view, erm, it takes time erm to turn around people and rural place they, they do not change quickly…"* or otherwise *"they'll probably go along with it but they'd be thinking you know we'll outlast him"*. So *"part of it is about journeying together, it's about developing relationship and trust"* and the route from A to B *"is probably different for different places."*

13.5.3 The interviewee observes that *"people are less and less interested about being on positions of responsibility when they come…they want to recharge their soul, their spiritual batteries. They want to have an experience but don't want necessarily want to have a responsibility to things"* and that because of that there are *"few who seem to be willing to serve in that way and their feeling more tired (or stressed)."*

13.5.4 Overall, *"I work with people who are very committed and talented in their own right but basically there's almost this kind of indifference"…. "they would probably expect me y'know to go ahead and provide more directive leadership."* Local people *"do lots and lots of things they're very busy at ministries but the kind of formal leadership stuff it's a little bit different"* because *"there is still an awful lot of ministry that happens informally through networks"* and *"sometimes that formality almost works against being able to responsive to changing circumstances."*

13.5.5 *"In terms of gathered church sort of stuff, er, we have lay persons who are very much involved with readings, intercessions, helping to administer Holy Communion, sidespersons welcoming team, cleaners, all that kind of stuff."* And they have also started to *"experiment a bit"* with one church hosting a service for all three.

13.5.6 In terms of new initiatives, *"Messy church has effectively taken the place of Sunday school in many places."* There are also Community Drop Ins which are *"completely run by lay teams and I have nothing to do with but they know I'm supportive and I'll drop when I can."*

13.5.7 Among the new developments have been a Holiday at Home which has been run for the past three years by lay teams, with the interviewee and the Methodist minister joining in as one expression of an ecumenical co-operation in which the interviewee says *"we work very closely together as churches"* in the context of a *"covenant introduced between our two churches"* in which *"we pray together every Wednesday…..we always do holy weekend and Good Friday stuff together. We run a big messy church y'know that sort of thing, we do messy church together over at the Methodist hall because they have a far more superior building than we do. Ours is grey, while medieval….well as theirs is late Victorian they got chairs instead of pews and a lovely chapel which is nice and warm compared to our barn of a church…and a brand new kitchen we are envious of so we do a lot of stuff with them at their facility because it's more central in the village and it's more appropriate."*

13.5.8 Although *"we are much closer ecumenically than many LEPs (actually are)…..a formal LEP I think it would kill the spirit that we've got but I er I'm looking to the day when it may well be that we have to close one of the buildings……we should really be one local church. I'm not sure we should have the luxury of two different Christian churches within this village for a point of admission and also sustainability."*

13.5.9 *"It's taken some time to release the spirit and to help them to actually experiment with some different things"* and now *"it's become a much more of an associational network"* but the wider concern is that for *"the future of the church in England is going to be too little too late."*

13.6 **Whole Church Development Training**

13.6.1 *"Well to me ministry is about the people of God in service to God's will…my theology is very much rooted in baptism…I see every person not that every one of them will see themselves that way but my view of it is that you know they're the front line ministers….and so I want very much when they come and join in for public worship to feel that they're actually being equipped and refreshed."*

13.6.2 For developing authorised lay leadership people go through the ***diocese programme for authorised lay leaders*** and continue to be monitored by the diocese….

13.6.3 *"More locally we tend to run things like used to be called the **Bishop's Certificate**"* and one of the Readers helps to run various groups." In relation to **Alpha** *"they didn't necessarily want to integrate with the local church"* but *"we are running it again joining with the Methodist church"* despite the fact that in the end *"it seemed to produce **Alpha** junkies." **Pilgrim*** has not yet been used because of the interviewee's concern that as Anglican materials it might exclude the Methodists.

13.6.4 Overall, the interviewee's view of lay needs and wishes in relation to training is that *"they want something to be participative that helps them to do practice, to reflect on experience, and they find that much more engaging when we run those courses, than for running something which is more traditional lecture."*

HIGHLIGHTS FROM RURAL MULTI-CHURCH MINISTRY INTERVIEWS WITH THOSE WITH WIDER THAN LOCAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Together with those interviewed in local contexts, interviews were also undertaken with a number of people working on either a broader geographical basis in oversight of the churches and/or church buildings, and those with a remit for training.

Interviewee (EM-S) with Wider Than Local Responsibility

14.1 **Context**

14.1.1 Over half the Church of England churches in the interviewee's geographical area were rural, some having *"one priest with 7 or 8 churches working on their own as the only ordained person."* In others *"perhaps bringing together 3 or 4 benefices in to a sort of group or team so that the clergy still have responsibility for sort of 8 or 9 churches but they're sharing their skills and resources across the group of maybe 20 or 30 churches and streamlining operations a bit."*

14.2 **Interviewee Leadership Style and Training**

14.2.1 *"I don't have a training qualification as such just lots of experience of training"* and *"leadership development is my passion so I am very much you know wanting to get other lay people, and lay people to lead well and clergy ordained people to be better in enablers and equippers of lay people."*

14.2.2 *"There is always a resource challenge in terms of people resources more than anything and not enough particularly in rural parishes there is just not enough people to do stuff"* – and the buildings challenge: *"to get people focussing on mission and ministry and growing in the church when they are trying to raise funds to ...their broken down roof is always tricky."*

14.2.3   The interviewee notes that *"in some parts of the church there is a kind of anti: some people don't like to talk about leadership, they think it's too secular the concept and all these management gurus coming in and telling us what to do all about service."*

14.2.4   Intentionality is identified as important: *"if you've got a leader who is a vicar who is passionate about developing and growing their church then it's more likely to grow"* and in the view of the interviewee, *"Most of the churches that are declining ....are because of they haven't been well led."*

14.2.5   The way forward in terms of effective wider oversight is *"mostly relationally mostly modelling telling good stories and sharing good practice...so that other people can picture it because often it's just lack of imagination but if you can get people to see something has worked then they are more likely to buy in."*

14.2.6   Of course, there is the challenge that *"some of our older more traditional clergy....want to be the one that does everything, but I think newer more recently trained clergy are trained in the model of shared leadership and raising people up and recognising that if you've got eight churches you can't do everything so therefore you need to be identifying potential leaders all the time and investing in them and equipping them and training them up."*

14.3   Changing Church Culture

14.3.1   The challenges facing rural churches should be kept in proportion because in villages *"10% of the population go to church, which if you had 10% of urban parishes you'd know would be a revival."*

14.3.2   But rural areas are *"used to a model of a church where you know there was one vicar in the village who rode around on his horse"* so *"stepping up in to a more shared model of leadership is, is quite a challenge for some of the older people"* because *"you went to church and everything was done to you and for you....consumers of church."* At the same time, this is not only a matter of age, *"you can have some very energetic, sort of eighty year old people who still are learning and growing and being change agents and some who are sort of 45 going on 90."*

14.3.3   In small church communities there can also be the attitude that *"this is the family that has owned the church for you know for generations and generations....and then the incomers who are perhaps not made to feel as welcome"* so in their wider role, what the interviewee is doing *"is speaking to parishes trying to help them rethink what ministry and mission looks like in today's culture."*

14.3.4   Money plays a role: *"churches which have historic legacies are usually less willing to join up with others because they want to hold on to their reserves and the ones that are really struggling are more keen to join up with others"*....but also *"some villages have a very territorial. They won't work with the village down the road because in the civil war their grandfather fought with you know...."* But given the energies that can be absorbed by financial systems *"why replicate them, replicate the systems sort of a dozen times when you have some things are streamlined and done just once?"*

14.3.5   *"I think it's more often about hearts than minds actually. I think people can know it's in their heads but still be very stubborn about, well this is my church and this is the way that its always been done and I expect the vicar to do it and I'm not going to get involved"* and one just has to accept and understand that in relation to change there will be *"earlier adopters and late adopters."* At the same time, *"if we don't turn it around in 20 or 30 years then there won't be anything to turn around so yes, we're sort of at crunch time."*

14.4   Whole Church Development

14.4.1   *"I think we're in the midst of yet another big culture change in the Church of England"* although over wider geographical areas like the interviewee is responsible for, *"it varies hugely because each setting or group of people is slightly different. It's not like trying to change M&S."*

14.4.2   *"There is no magic bullet"…"its recognising that it's a slow burn"* in a context where *"You wouldn't start from here but starting from where you are you have to look at what you've got and how you work with what and invest in people and help them to have better training and understanding, yeah use what you've got to share good practice."*

14.4.3   *"When churches are in a vacancy and when the vicar's leaving I will often work with churches doing a bit of visioning and looking at what has change look like and what needs to happen….culture change is a key part of my role"* which also involves *"gentle chipping away and working with people like Jerry Marshall and the **Arthur Rank Centre** in running the **learning communities.**"*

14.4.4   It is partly to avoid having to *"reinvent the wheel"* for each church or group of churches that the Diocese is following the learning community approach. But it is also because *"to help people work out for themselves that its better rather than imposing it upon them because so much of church life is you have to sort of coach rather than impose because people can object, it has to be bottom up to work really."*

14.4.5   In relation to leadership, the interviewee has used **CPAS Growing Leaders** *"which I think is great"* and the Diocese is doing a "pilot" of *"the **learning communities with CPAS and the Arthur Rank Centre** across a group of three of the most rural deaneries"*. While it is still early in the process, and time commitment to it is a challenge, the interviewee comments that *"the mood music is positive and I think people are finding a creative way of engaging thinking and communicating with people who are facing similar issues."*

14.4.6   *"We have a good system in this diocese of authorised lay ministry so we **train up ALMs in evangelism, administration, worship leading, children's wor**k any number of things it's a kind of low key course that again is not accredited"* *"ongoing training and a kind of not a licensing as such but a renewal every five years"* *"we have trained up 300 to 400 people over the last 4-5 years."*

Interviewee (UM-S) with Wider Than Local Responsibility

15.1   Context

15.1.1   *"On the whole most of our rural churches have foundered through a lack of numbers and a lack of finance so they will have closed or merged with others churches quite typically in market towns."* Except in so far as charity rules require it, *"our synod structures, our general assembly structure has no authority to say to a church, you've passed whichever threshold this may be and therefore you must close."*

15.2   Interviewee Leadership Style and Training

15.2.1   The interviewee's own training has been in the *"**school of hard knocks**"* but *"to my shame I have not been able to take up the opportunity in **training in rural ministry through the Arthur Rank Centre**. I would certainly encourage people to have a look at what is on offer there"* and is *"I am connected with **our National Rural Officer** who is based at the Arthur Rank Centre."*

15.2.2 The interviewee says that leadership for rural churches *"is very much cutting edge question for us, about how we sustain it."* because *"We have such a limited pool of ministry available"* that currently are in *"a holding pattern"* which *"in some centres its managing continued decline and not a strategy for growth"*. This is because *"we are running out of people, they are daring to get older and daring to retire"* and *"what we are not doing is addressing the filling in from new stock as it were"* because *"we are not recruiting vocations quickly enough so there's not that drive that perhaps there was in earlier years to encourage vocations for ministry."*

15.2.3 *"Within the URC we have a policy that the number of ministers will only deploy amongst our churches the number of ministers that we can afford to pay….So we can model what we expect our income to be, or we have to model the number of ministers we can afford to provide."* Coupled with this, *"The number of congregations is also declining as well but at a much slower rate"*. So, overall, the interviewee feels that *"If we are always doing what we have always done then it's working to that extent that its working but is working well enough for the 21st century, then no I don't think it is."*

15.2.4 As a consequence of this overall context *"we are going to have to turn more heavily to local lay leaders."* Of course, within the United Reformed Church, a system of local elders already exists, at least in principle, but *"in some places that elders meeting is not sufficient, and we have a system where we can appoint elders in local leadership as lay leaders to be the figurehead person, to be the vision-setter"* and *"we expect to be doing that much more prolifically in the coming years."*

15.2.5 In relation to the qualities of leadership needed, the interviewee notes that, *"I think it needs to be quite situational"*…and that is anyway, in relation to the United Reformed Church's ecclesiological approach, *"our default style to work in a collegial ministry."*

15.3 Changing Church Culture

15.3.1 *"I think it needs to be quite visionary to look beyond what we've always done"* but *"The church is quite a conservative institution, we don't deal with change very well or very quickly, I think those days have already come to an end. The trouble is that it is going to take us a while for the actual folk in our churches on Sunday morning to catch up with that reality."*

15.3.2 *"We have operated on a pretty passive model so far"*, but *"engagement with church life has got to be a lot more active than that."* Nevertheless quite a number of local churches are still *"looking for the minister who will offer good worship on a Sunday and clear preaching and good pastoral care through the week. And they're operating on a model where each community each village would have had their own minister."*

15.3.3 But *"now that we're in a different reality where a minister might be covering two or three or four or five or even more communities….I don't think they have quite got rid of that older style of ministry they still expect to have their named minister"* and *"That's clearly not going to be sustainable into the future."*

15.3.4 *"We've got to look at whether to offer church in a different format"* and because of that, leaders are needed who can *"read the signs of the times"*, so *"What I want them to want to expect is somebody to lead them in mission and not just be interested in propping up the institution but about really making a difference to the lives living around them."*

15.3.5 Such change can be addressed during a ministerial interregnum and also by using the United Reformed Church's four year programme cycle of review, but realistically, *"This is a question that can take over a generation or more to address."*

15.4   **Whole Church Development**

15.4.1   In terms of what is now offered in training, the interviewee believes that the United Reformed Church *"certainly provide contextual and contemporary leadership training, but it's not specifically focused on rural ministry"* although there *"transferable principles."* Overall, *"it's about updating the model of ministry"* and developmental work has been done using **Mission Shaped Ministry** and **Mission Shaped Introduction** from **Fresh Expressions**

15.4.2   The United Reformed Church has a strong official orientation to learning: *"we have declared ourselves to be a learning church"* but especially because of that, it is *"frustrating and distressing when we see it within the church, people think that they are the finished article but none of them are."* So there is a lay training fund.

15.4.3   However, for engagement in training, particularly in rural areas, the lack of public transport and issues (especially for elderly people) related to driving after dark are barriers to centrally provided training events, while others will be reluctant to engage in training because they have had bad educational experience in other contexts.

15.4.4   Because of these challenges, on the one hand they try to deliver training as locally as possible while on the other hand, *"we have developed **some training that uses the Moodle platform***" although in relation to this latter they have been *"finding that people are a bit more reluctant to engage in that because it's a mode of learning that many are yet to experience"* and that *"I often think there is an advantage in being involved in face to face training, you know, the group dynamic evolves much greater than online virtual training."*

15.4.5   Certification has not been found generally to be important for many, although it is for some. Overall, the kind of lay training that is offered includes **training in pastoral care for elders** for the local church; **training about "boundaries"**; **Child safeguarding**; **training in leadership and in preaching and preparation for people able to preside at Holy Communion** (which is permissible in the United Reformed Church when no ordained minister is available).

15.4.6   Recently the URC General Assembly launched an overall programme called **People of the Way Living the Life of Jesus Today** with the overall aim that *"we want to recapture the original DNA of the church, and the church was originally a missionary organisation"* and that ministry is *"relational, it's about getting alongside people."*

Interviewee (ML-S) with Wider Than Local Responsibility

16.1   **Context**

16.1.1   The role of the interviewee is a Methodist District one, since it is at the District level that permission needs to be obtained by local Methodist churches to buy or sell property or make major developments. In relation to this, the interviewee (who acts in the capacity of a District Property Officer on a voluntary basis) explained that *"my role is to advise them, essentially on whether the project is appropriate, you know if it's worth and it fits with the Mission aims of both the church, the local the circuit, the District and the Connection"* while the implementation of *"project management is down to the local church and they deal with clearances and solicitors, and surveyors, architects and builders."*

16.2   Interviewee Leadership Style and Training

16.2.1   *"I have a strong view that the presbyters are, ordained ministry of word and sacrament and not property."* But *"local leadership and the way that is expressed in terms of encouragement and vision is vitally important"* and in relation to such leadership *"one of the major issues of the moment is finding volunteers that have got the time to take on these roles because primarily the church are run by volunteers"* and in practice, *"a lot of it is down really to the retired and the geriatrics like me."*

16.2.2   The interviewee's District has been through a process of amalgamating circuits, as a result of which the number of circuits reduced by around 45%. The interviewee observed that in the light of that *"one thought that by having larger circuit there would be a greater pool of volunteers from which to draw to fill posts. But the opposite was true in as much as people perceived the role that they ....that the role had increased in terms of size, responsibility and workload and that it became almost impossible to fill some of these roles."*

16.2.3   One consequence of this has been that *"within the Methodist Church now we are increasingly finding that we're having to employ people to take on roles of circuit administration and some of my equivalents in other districts are actually paid."* Thus, in relation to property roles such as his own, while *"At one stage we had a connectional property office in Manchester, that disappeared and they were the people that made the decisions and in that regard that responsibilities been devolved down to districts."* Now, however, they are looking across districts to *"pool resource and then instead of having four volunteers doing ten hours or so a week, a full time qualified person to oversee the process."*

16.3   Changing Church Culture

16.3.1   In terms of rural multi-church ministry *"the big issue at the moment is how you maintain a Christian presence in a village where you don't have a church."*

16.3.2   But especially in the rural context, the interviewee believes strongly that *"there is no future for the Methodists and Anglicans unless it's in partnership and particularly in rural settings where generally speaking the only churches are of either Methodist or Anglican and most of the other denominations gather congregations in town centres."* This is because *"we are no longer in my view in a position where in the rural village, the village can be expected to support three buildings, the village hall, the Anglican church and the Methodist church and people have got to get real about where they want to focus their money instead of a building because so much of our money is really tied up instead of being used for mission but for propping up crumbling buildings."*

16.3.3   A different model is needed in which *"we need to ....consecrate village halls by our presence in the village halls take over the village halls and you know you can rent space there."*

16.4   Whole Church Development

16.4.1   In the end, and as expressed by one who has significant responsibility for a large number of Methodist churches and related buildings, the training and development challenge and need, especially but not exclusively in rural areas is *"trying to get the word over that you know people don't really recognise that the church is not the building it's the people and it's about creating sacred space, and not necessarily that has to be done within the church building."*

Interviewee (EM-S) with Wider Than Local Responsibility

17.1   **Context**

17.1.1   The interviewee leads a team of people delivering training with clergy and lay people and with *"quite a strong emphasis on rural contexts."* 10 people engaged in this including 5 full time (including 1 administrator) and 5 part time. They are *"funded solely by the diocese"* but work with *"lots of partners"* including *"of course, throughout, the **Arthur Rank Centre**, people at **CPAS** we also work with quite closely"* also *"piloted with them, their **Thrive Course** which is associated with the **Germinate courses** that the **Arthur Rank Centre** are doing as well."*

17.2   **Interviewee Leadership Style and Training**

17.2.1   In relation to initial multi-church training specifically the interviewee thinks that what is offered is *"still quite limited"* although varied, though **placements** have helped. But *"looking at the sort of people being appointed into colleges and courses I don't see many that have extensive multi-church experience"* and *"Because the lived experience of most clergy is multi-church activity I would say that this is one that needs to be factored into the training programme thoroughly"*. In other words, *"It's not simply about having a session on multi-church.....it needs to thread its way through...and that's woven into what you talk about"* and *"the team in the initial training need to be more reflective and representative of what the role's going to be like now other than what it was 10 or 20 years ago."*

17.2.2   In relation to church governance, *"What we are finding in some of our smaller communities it isn't that there aren't enough opportunities for people to get involved, but there aren't enough people to get involved."* and quite simply *"It's not realistic to have 5 treasurers in 5 separate parishes!"*

17.3   **Changing Church Culture**

17.3.1   But in the face of the challenges it is possible to overlook *that "one of the amazing success stories is that direct giving from church members has rocketed"*, while in relation to the encouragement of lay involvement in ministry, *"I think quite a lot of progress has been made"* especially when one takes into account that *"for many people who are older this is a big change."*

17.4   **Whole Church Development**

17.4.1   The Diocese is using the **Leading Your Church into Growth** materials and one of the things the interviewee says has emerged from this *"is the distinction between being a friendly church and a church where people make friends...It's the next stage that seems quite important to people to make people belong in a deeper sense"* which *"appears to be a reasonably common issue for Church of England churches."*

17.4.2   The Diocese has *"a very **extensive programme for curates** (in the first four years of ordained ministry)"* including *"**specific training in working in a multi-church context**"* and *"many of them are **placed in a multi-church context**"*. In addition, **every incumbent has a mentor** and the Diocese runs what it calls **'multi-church challenge workshops'** which have involved clergy and lay people from such contexts coming together to share and learn. There is also a **generic leadership training programme** that takes place over a calendar year and involves an introductory day, three residential meetings and *"modest amounts of reflection in between."*

17.4.3 In relation to leadership models the interviewee explains that *"We explore a range and take people's personality very seriously"* for which they use **Insights Discovery** which has British Psychological Society accreditation and: *"One of the points we're making is that there isn't just one way to lead and it's an interaction between tradition and context and personality and goodness knows what else."*

17.4.4 For lay people specifically *"we offer a **whole range of courses for lay people to enhance what they do**, but also **to develop as people and spiritually** and that includes **how they can operate within the multi-church context** (obviously that's just a given really)."* These include "anything from a **one-off event** right through to **training for 3 years as a Lay Reader**…and we have **all sorts of things in between**". There is also a 16 session programme for **Recognised Parish Assistants** which over 300 people have gone through in the past five years and *"that develops people's basic understanding about Church, Bible, Mission and so on and then gives a little bit of focused attention in several areas which include Pastoral Work, Worship Leading, Mission, Children and Youth and one or two others. This is very much done under the oversight of the local incumbent…..but it is …Diocesan strategy to build up teams of people within benefices, not least because of the multi-church context"*. Finally, they have also facilitated the **Leading your Church in Growth programme** and the **CPAS Thrive Communities** which consisted of *"four weekends and trying to bring people together from multi-church benefices into a learning community which had a different focus each weekend."*

17.4.5 In terms of evaluation *"it isn't that there aren't ways to measure it, but they can become quite crude around how many people do this, and how many people do the other and that has some value and it does have something to say to us, but we are constantly aware that it is not the full picture."*

Interviewee (UM-S) with Wider Than Local Responsibility

18.1 Context

18.1.1 In the Synod of the United Reformed Church in which this interviewee operates as Moderator, *"The average size of the congregations in most places is between 10 and 25 people. They are mainly elderly"* and what's more *"we don't get anyone extra to the carol services because they go to the midnight carol lit service. It's the romanticism again. Even the festivals can feel like every other week."*

18.1.2 *"Ministry numbers are dropping which is in line with most other denominations; which has in turn led to thinking about – what we are, who we are, how do we provide and what do we do?"*. In this context *"single pastorates for ourselves are almost a thing of the past and as people are less and less of a Minister the biggest single thing we have found is that we need to empower people in the local setting."*

18.2 Interviewee Leadership Style and Training

18.2.1 The Synod has a **Rural Advocate** who produces **quarterly newsletter** and **scopes resources** which include **Focus booklets** that are produced to help mission where churches are. The United Reformed Church nationally has **Thinking Ahead About….** which aims to resource rural churches in future planning based on festivals. The **Methodist Church's Presence workbook** for rural churches is being *"re-written at the moment to include URC input."*

18.2.2 In recent work with ministers in relation to leadership styles and models, *"very few wanted to talk of themselves as powerful or leading. They were much happier with servants"*. But *"There is a huge need for our ministers to be able to empower others to be the leaders and that means you've got to have a high level of confidence in yourself as well as to be letting go….that's a huge mindset."*

18.2.3 *"I would argue that I think we have moved to point certainly throughout their training we tell students over and over again that they are almost definitely that they not going to be in a single pastorate, that it may be multi, it may well be some rural with some in town in linked into it, it may be a mixture"* and because of these realities, *"we talk about that a lot and* **through the Arthur Rank Centre people can do rural placements***. I think they are really, really good."*

18.2.4 But there remains an overall problem that ministerial *"students have a romanticised view of ministry"*. Partly this is because *"A lot of those who come into train, on the whole are from the bigger and more successful churches rather than the small country church, so it hasn't ever been their experience rural multi-church"* and then faced with that reality, find that *"Trying to fit all the bits together that they can get hung up on the maintenance rather than the mission – it can be a very daunting prospect."*

18.2.5 Because of this *"one of the things we do have to do is to increase awareness of rural life"* in a context where the interviewee notes that although Countryfile is one of the most watched programmes on the television, rural life is quite alien to many people: *"they're not used to the dark, they're not used to the sound of animals, and they're not used to smells!"*

18.2.6 In terms of lay leadership, the historic United Reformed Church pattern is based on an approach of *"Eldership in every church along with the minister are responsible for the whole life of the local church."* But the Church's General Assembly recently agreed that each local congregation can additionally put forward a person for the role of Presiding Elder which the interviewee feels *"opens up possibilities for churches who have somebody like that to say here's a ministry we can offer locally as a church and isn't stipendiary minister dependent."*

18.3 Changing Church Culture

18.3.1 But there can be a gap between ecclesiological theory and ecclesiological reality: *"It is staggering at how minister-dependent how many of the people have become over the years on a person instead"* and this, even though *"we are denomination that believes in the priesthood of all believers"*. But moving away from that minister-dependency *"is an answer to falling stipendiary ministry that actually fits with us as a denomination, as to how we ought to be doing church anyway. In a way, it's just taking people back to their roots but saying what does it look like in 2017 to live out the life Jesus."*

18.3.2 Governance issues are not such a problem for United Reformed Church as for some Churches because *"We do have the freedom to appoint as do the local churches because the governance is at church meetings."* However, in *practice "We are very dependent on our lay preachers who lead about two-thirds of our worship every week….They would expect to be doing the bulk of the pastoral care and being the volunteers for the mission as well."* And in this context *"We don't want people to get totally overburdened. The biggest issue, especially in our rural churches is that age of the people that you're asking to take on the roles….they're tired."* This is a reason why *"it's so important to have termed appointments, so they are not committed for 62 years!"* in relation to which the interviewee argues that *"They should be for three years, with an option to do another three years."*

18.3.3 *"At the same time we need to be thinking of new ways of releasing new ministry in places – that's your new expressions and pioneer ministry and where does that fit, and how does that look in rural settings?"* and the interviewee cites initiatives such as Messy Church; Church in the Market Square; Couch Ministry (in a Shopping Centre); Breakfast Church; and Church 10 (for people on way to work in the morning): *"Traditional church just doesn't do it for a lot of people now. We have to change if we are going to be relevant."*

18.3.4 In addition, *"Denominations must come out of their silos and rural ministry has to become more ecumenical. At the moment that is proving really difficult because the number and money game have meant that denominations have gone in on themselves, and are less willing to be ecumenical at a time for the rural church that it is the only way forward"*. Today *"You can't have a Methodist Chapel, a URC and an Anglican church all not having a conversation in a rural community of 3,000 people."*

18.4 **Whole Church Development**

18.4.1 The ecumenical imperative is one of the reasons *"why me anything me and my colleagues do **we don't copyright anything** – we deliberately make it available across the other denominations. We have got to produce joint resources, joint thinking."*

18.4.2 Formal training for both ordained and lay people has moved from a singular to multiple patterns. However, especially for older people, *"it is harder to get them to travel larger distances"* due to *"transport limitations."* In order to address this, while some **online approaches** are being tried, an attempt is being made to plan to deliver/repeat things at more local levels, this interviewee noting that *"**Resources into their hands** seems to work well, really well"* and this is done by delivering at least one copy of each resource free to every local church: *"**People with resources coming to help them** works well, but they are very programme fed up with Church in general."* Such resources include the booklet **From Welcome to Belonging** given *"that's one of the areas we want to address with the discipleship issue because if you're hoping to create disciples you've got to have them belonging."* They are also using **Holy Habits** from the Methodist Church.

18.4.3 But as a whole, the denomination is looking at a **new resource focusing on Missional Discipleship** to *"start at the grass roots in every church and then to have training opportunities that will grow out of that"* rather than something like a year's programme: *"In theory....every local church will have the same based, although it will develop differently in every place – the principles are the same and therefore, ought to help Ministers in the long run also who are working with multi-pastorate rural settings."* To help in rolling this out, they are for the first time gathering all ministers in a national conference because they are still "gatekeepers" and need to understand and engage with this process for it to be effective.

18.4.4 A programme called **Training for Learning and Serving** was originally in place for training lay preachers. This is now ending and is being replaced with **Walking the Way** – which will be *"missional discipleship based."*

18.4.5 Overall, in relation to training, while online modes are being developed, the interviewee has a concern that *"if we go too much down the online thing it will put them on the margins, as the rural aren't that savvy with that way of learning"* and *"in some rural locations the internet connection is dreadful"* and that, in any case, *"There is no substitute for someone doing it alongside them."*

KEY THEMES FROM CASE STUDIES OF MINISTRY MODELS

19.1 Introduction

19.1.1 This part of the report explores the strategies adopted to build and empower lay leadership within rural multi-church communities. It focuses on the additional analysis of the interviews conducted for the substantive part of the study. Here we explore the range and types of training and development that is currently being used and an assessment of what is perceived as beneficial. The appendices of the report presents the types of training and development that were identified by research respondents as being beneficial to the development of lay ministry. In addition to this an extensive mapping was undertaken to identified training and development more generally provided by the three denominations. A directory of resources was compiled, this can be found in the report appendices.

19.1.2 In order to complete the mapping exercise, the research team undertook a review of Diocesan, Synod and District websites in respect of the three denominations targeted, i.e. Church of England, United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church. In addition, a limited number of ecumenical websites were included where these were mentioned by respondents in interview or where there were links or references to them contained within denominational websites.

19.1.3 The desk-based website review provided us with an initial overview of the range and type of leadership development activities that are available across the country to enhance leadership capacity in rural multi-church groups. It quickly became clear that leadership development programmes specifically targeted at rural, multi-church settings are limited in number and that both clergy and lay members of congregations are being offered (and are participating in) leadership development programmes which although not specifically designed for their needs, are making a positive contribution.

19.1.4 As already reported on in detail above, in addition to the desk research of websites, qualitative interviews with 21 individuals were conducted. An important aspect of individual interviews was to gather respondents' views on the range and type of leadership development training they had personally undertaken and/or had encouraged or arranged for lay congregational members. Drawing on both the websites review and the qualitative interviews the research team created case studies of good practice to evidence how leadership development (in all its manifestations) is being experienced at the local level. To do this it was necessary to select examples where there was sufficient information about how training and development activities were chosen, recruited to, delivered, and any impacts that were discerned in relation to the enhancement of leadership capacity.

19.1.5 The next stage of analysis involved a synthesis of all available data and the assessment by the research team of what forms of training and development appear to be working well, and why. In particular an examination of the rural context of training and development is evidenced in the case studies and the specific context of individuals (clergy and lay) within the rural churches.

19.1.6 Based upon the synthesis, the final stage of the research comprised the development of a series of recommendations which identify gaps in provision, delivery and type of leadership development that appear most likely to enable churches to fulfil their ambitions.

20.1 **Types of training and development provided**

20.1 .1 When undertaking the assessment, it is clear there is an extensive amount of training and development opportunities available (see appendices). We identified three levels/types of training available (see Figure 1 below). These are usually located within the denominational structures / bodies and support training and development for formal roles such as the Licensed Lay Minister (LLM) role and the Authorised Lay Minister (ALM) within the Church of England or a Local Preacher in the Methodist Church. This first level of training leads to formal accredited roles and responsibilities within the church.

Figure 1: Three identified training and development levels

| Lay and authorised formal training | Bought in formal training programmes | Locally developed training and mentoring |

20.1 .2 A second level of training is often provided at a local level in parishes/benefices which may be formal in that although not leading to license or authorisation they offer a structured course that has been developed externally and delivered locally. Examples include; the Alpha Course, Pilgrim Course and Growing Leaders. These courses tend to have been brought in with a specific purpose, although little was articulated about this.

20.1 .3 The third level of training reflects a more informal approach. These courses are more likely to be devised by the local priest, minister or other authorized leader who has identified a particular need, or are delivered in the form of mentoring with members of the congregation who have been identified as interested or receptive to engaging in a more in-depth examination of their faith. These can have a multiple of functions from providing bible study, discussion of theological questions or opportunities to bring members of the community closer together.

20.1 .4 A wide range of opportunities were identified, the majority, broadly speaking, falling within these general groupings. Although there is an extensive amount of training available the majority is generically developed focusing on mission, discipleship, worship, pastoral work and youth. They are not context specific and may be ecumenical, offering wide appeal to a range of denominations. The majority of the training and development identified for the rural multi-church context was developed by either the Arthur Rank Centre (ARC) or by the Church Pastoral Aid Society (CPAS).

20.1 .5 This was specifically the case for leadership development. Both organisations were credited with providing the most useful, relevant and accessible support available for the development of the lay membership in a rural multi church context. The local programmes that were identified, particularly those that were bought in, tended to be contextualised to meet the needs of the rural multi-church communities.

20.1 .6 Resources were identified as important. The United Reform Church produce a range of materials including newsletters focused specifically on rural issues and booklets which explore Mission work. They have also developed resources for churches in rural locations which are based round the various festivals and are developing workbooks for rural churches to help them think about who they are and identifying the positive opportunities for rural work. These were felt to be particularly useful for those who want to be involved and didn't have the time for formal engagement.

CASE STUDY 1 Dedicated resources for the rural context

"The Eastern Synod of United Reform Church produces a newsletter every quarter called Rural Matters which is about really helping rural churches, it focuses on resources that can help them with engaging their congregations as well as providing them with the information that's coming out of places like the Arthur Rank Centre for rural ministries and that sort of thing. Within the URC we have produced another resource called "Thinking ahead about…" which is for use with churches in their rural location and it is based around the festivals of the year. It's a way of resourcing worship but also of reaching into the community with different ways of thinking about the seasons and how we used them especially in rural churches where activities take place at their local churches like harvest festivals – these are observed more intently in rural churches than in some suburban churches."

21.1 Barriers to engagement

21.1.1 Through the research we were able to examine a range of views and perceptions concerning the type of training that was available for lay members. A number of barriers were identified which reflected many of the issues that rural residents generally experience including geographical location, transport, timings, access to internet and quality of training. In addition to these, confidence of the lay member and confidence of the minister could also prove problematic, as could the quality of the training and attracting the right people to engage.

21.1.2 Geography was identified as probably the major issue for those living in a rural setting. Training and development opportunities are often delivered in the county town or a larger market town. Examples were provided where a round trip to do a training course could be 3.5 hours travel alone. This combined with reduced local infrastructure in terms of public transport often provided a major barrier to engagement. Therefore, for those who did not have their own transport, they were reliant on others to provide with lifts which was not always possible. The location of training was therefore a key consideration that needed to be factored in when training was being provided. Because of the issue with distance one Diocese had been encouraged to release training for lay pastoral assistants and lay worship leaders locally, this had contributed to a lot more people coming forward.

"Formal training is available but people are not always keen to go, participate in larger groupings and meeting people from other churches. Geography, transport, age, infirmity all impact on engagement".

21.1.3 The demographics of the rural population also contributed to some of the issues. It was identified that many of the local residents who attended church were elderly and did not always have the energy or want to engage in what could be perceived as demanding roles. Alternatively, where younger members of the congregation were interested in developing a lay leadership role they might often have work and family commitments which were difficult to combine with the requirements of the formal training courses. As such identifying individuals that who had, time, energy and a willingness to get involved was often problematic.

21.1.4 Engaging the right people was highlighted as a barrier. One minister suggested that no matter what course was put on it was always the same people who attended, they were referred to as the 'Alpha Junkies'. This did not help increase the number of lay people engaged as it was not always the right people with the right gifts attended. Trying to encourage the right people to attend was problematic, often people were not willing to travel or to engage in training with people from other churches.

"I think I go back to the fact that the people that are in the chapels need to be willing to want to learn, now how we get over that I don't know. The only way I would suggest is local delivery in local places to small numbers of local people which is very costly time wise and travel wise".

21.1.5 One of the greatest barriers identified to engagement in training and development activities was confidence, this was both the confidence of the lay person who did not feel they could take on a more formal role within their church and also in some cases that of their minister. Many participants spoke of the challenges in building confidence which would allow lay people to take on both formal and informal roles in the church. Later in this section we explore some of strategies that helped to address this.

21.1.6 Perhaps more concerning was that for many respondents in the study they saw their colleague's lack of willingness to share their pastoral and ministerial role as a major barrier to the engagement of lay people. All those we spoke to were committed to the development of lay leadership but many spoke of their concerns for colleagues.

21.1.7 Quality and modes of delivery were identified as a potential issue to engagement. A number of participants described courses they had been engaged in that had not worked well. This was often because they were not contextualised for the audience either as a rural audience or because of pre-existing levels of knowledge. When training worked well it utilised visual tools, was interactive, fun, used a mixture of methods and allowed people to dip in and out. Opportunities that included reflection and supported people to reflect on their experiences were welcomed. This reflection was often felt to be more relevant and empowering than engaging with courses and structured learning.

"Training needs to be good quality, professionally done, relevant to the person and the context they are working in. People want it linked to the rural context. When we deliver it ourselves we can do this".

21.1.8 Although some spoke about web based training opportunities, these have yet to be fully operationalised. One of the major issues for web based training is the levels of poor broadband in some rural areas (yet another infrastructure issue). Although there was an interest in opportunities to develop e-learning, again infrastructure and demographics were perceived as barriers to this. It was recommended that many of the handbooks that are produced for training should be available as e-documents this way it would be easier to keep them up to date.

21.1.9 The length of training was identified by some as a barrier. There was some concern that there was a conflict between clergy identifying a calling and the formal process required, this was seen as a one size fits all approach.

"You kind of want a balance, you want to empower people and give them the skills they need but actually sometimes I think we are over-skilling them to do a very particular task , so yeah. I am slightly ambivalent to that, to current procedures in place".

"Whilst they may need a little bit of finessing potentially and actually probably need mentoring and walking along the side far more than they need a course that comes out of the book."

22.1 Enablers to engagement

22.1.1 We have considered a number of barriers to training and development but there were also a wide range of enablers identified. These often focus on personalities and location.

22.1.2 Encouragement to engage in training for formal lay leaders/pastoral assistants and non-formal activities was most frequently linked to the minister identifying individuals who had gifts/calling. Often as noted above confidence was a key issue. In these circumstances informal support through one to one discussions and mentoring helped to encourage and build the individuals confidence to engage. Respondents described trying to empower participants to engage in opportunities. Important within this was not just the initial training but the ongoing support.

"I would like to empower my communities. I would like to go out and find out what the people can do and facilitate their growth through encouraging them to explore how best they can grow and serve and provide the training as necessary, provide the support".

22.1.3 Having support and encouragement helped individuals to see that they could get involved and that there were opportunities for them to contribute. The range of roles available also encouraged people to assess where their strengths were. One example of this is case study 2 where individuals were supported to assess their gifts and passions and then to align these with roles and activities with the needs of the church.

CASE STUDY 2 Identifying gifts

"In one of the groups we did a vision-building series of activities to encourage people to engage with where we wanted to go. They came up with ideas of where God wanted us to go in the future and how we might put those things into practice – some good things came out of that. Basically, building God's kingdom ought to arise out of what he's given us. We started with question "Why" first, before the "How". What is our purpose, what are our values, and What God has given to us. We looked at our spiritual gifts, we could then determine that we ought to be using those gifts and passions, because when people are doing what they are gifted with or passionate about, chances are that they'll be good at it. I came as the vision bearer, but we can achieve anything that God wants us to do because we are God's people and he has given us resources. Our mission is the gifts that he has given us to do it with".

22.1.4 This approach helped to enthuse members of the congregation and to build their confidence and build their sense of awareness concerning themselves and how they could align their gifts specifically with what the church needed and to facilitate greater leadership. This also helped to assess across the group the varied aptitudes within the group and where they could be best maximised.

22.1.5 Case study 3 below demonstrates a different approach focusing on developing a better understanding of the messages from the church and an introduction to the various roles available for people to engage with.

CASE STUDY 3 Recognised Parish Assistant

"The recognised Parish Assistant course is a 16-session programme which develops people's basic understanding about Church, Bible, Mission and so on and then gives a little bit of focused attention to several areas which include: Pastoral work, Worship leading, Mission, Children & Youth and one or two others.

In just under 5 years we have taken 300 people through that programme. What we are finding in quite a number of cases where people gained confidence in undertaking this course, is that they want to continue to develop. This may be through attending individual events or other short courses we have available. In some cases, we have people who are going on to train as Readers and one or two who are looking at ordination.

It can open up things for people, we are happy for people to take this as far as they want to go. This is how the course has grown, because people go back saying that they were apprehensive about attending, but actually it was great. As a result, we tend to see clusters happening, and now we are beyond the initial surge, we are looking at how we can spread this out into other places. It does seep out, because people bump into other people and they hear stuff – sometimes you've got to be a little bit patient and wait for people to catch up".

22.1.6 This example suggests that engaging people is incremental. The course has a number of positive outcomes at various levels. It helped build a better understanding for participants of the churches mission, it built confidence and encouraged people to continue with their learning and their studies, and it promoted the opportunities to others through word of mouth and contributed to people developing leadership roles in the church.

22.1.7 The United Reformed Church has also developed a number of courses which offered a useful introduction, these included, Training for Learning and Serving (TLS) and the LITE programme which is Local Introductory Training Experiences. These courses offered integrated learning opportunities including, residential, home study and group activities which focus on discipleship and learning more about the Christian faith. The programmes can lead into different pathways for worship, pastoral, prayer and evangelism.

22.1.8 The courses provide a core set of activities which have been very popular and offer a comprehensive programme for those who want to learn a bit more, engage a little or want to take on more formal roles in the church.

22.1.9 Other initial/introductory type courses that were identified were the Alpha, Emmaus and Start courses. These were identified as useful starting points and were delivered across a range of the denominations. Most of the participants had been engaged and saw the key benefit as a way of getting people together. But there were preferences for some of the courses, see case study 4 below from a Methodist Minister.

> **CASE STUDY 4 Start Course**
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> "I have done the Alpha course. I have done the Start course and I really liked it. It provides a 10 mins DVD, and then an exercise to do. I found it very good with young people and once I was asked to do it with the Boy's Brigade, the course lasted 6 weeks. At the end we asked if it had touched the heart of any of these youngsters as we were not sure if it did. Then 3 leaders came forward and wanted to be confirmed. That was the start of it. The Alpha course is a bit posh. The people shown in the movie are very posh people".

22.1.10 Role models and mentoring were identified as useful ways of building confidence. Examples were provided of where members of the congregation had engaged in training promoted it to other members of the congregation. In this way they acted as role models providing concrete examples of 'if I can do it so can you'. These were often very inspiring to other members.

"Getting people involved is based round personal links – clergy encouraging people to get involved. Focus on word of mouth and promoting courses, encouraging each other to get involved".

22.1.11 Additionally, when lay members returned from training courses and promoted the quality and usefulness this contributed to others willingness to get involved as can be seen from case studies 2 and 5. For some courses a mentor was a component part to support ongoing development after the programme.

"I found my relationship with my mentor, who had done the course a couple of years before me, very interesting. Since then I have been a mentor for someone doing the course and found that I picked up other things from revisiting it from the other side."

22.1.12 One example focused on a 'Do it yourself Sunday'. See case study 5 below.

CASE STUDY 5 Role models

"We have developed the "Do it Yourself Sunday" as a priest was not always available. The Wardens started taking the service first and we used the liturgy for Morning Prayer, but then different people volunteered to do it and they all do it differently. Different people doing different things has been embraced. As a result, we have had two people come forward to lead intercession prayers who have not done it before. We have also had different people come forward to read the lessons/readings. It has been a success."

22.1.13 This provides an interesting example of role models and learning by doing. Through observation of 'people like us' being involved other people were encouraged to think about what they could do to contribute. This has helped build experience, capacity and confidence.

22.1.14 Mentoring was mentioned by several participants as an influential way of getting people involved. The quote below provides a good example of how capacity can be developed and confidence built. Sharing learning provides real opportunities.

"Using mentoring and modelling is important, bringing people together and pairing them with experienced people helps to develop learning".

22.1.15 The use of mentoring was for some respondents more useful than training. Although resource intensive it was often felt to provide a more profound impact, combined with informal information sharing and teaching it was more accessible to people.

22.1.16 Other strategies that helped to encourage lay membership engagement was location. We have already identified that geography and transport acted as a barrier to engagement. Most of the informal courses that were most successful were those delivered locally, most often in people's homes. This connected well with people, especially when food was involved.

"Location is important for getting people involved. Freezing church halls don't work – homes are much better".

22.1.17 This food dynamic was seen as one of the most successful elements of the Alpha course which had been adopted for locally delivered programmes. The combination of local homes and food was felt to encourage and enhance a sense of community and shared learning. This is applied to other training both formal and informal.

22.1.18 The development of a shared approach to learning was an important element of encouragement and engagement in the learning process (see case study 6 below). A number of examples were provided of short informal courses that were developed to help build community and a better understanding of Christian principles. One minister described some of the programmes she had put on which included, bible stories and history of the Old Testament. These were a good way of getting people engaged and were delivered in people's homes. The sense was that getting people to engage and talk about the issues was an example of success. It was felt that people would be more likely to get involved in something that was informal and local, than something that was felt to have an extensive investment in time and commitment.

> **CASE STUDY 6 – Shared learning**
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> "The programme wasn't specifically training but I think that it did help build the six people that I brought. I think all those six people you could see have grown in terms of confidence and ability but the course wasn't specifically aimed at teaching them and perhaps that's something worth bearing in mind that actually they learned almost in spite of themselves rather than because of it. So I think that was enormously helpful".

22.1.19 Some respondents identified that training in their area was delivered ecumenically with the Anglican, United Reformed Church and the Catholic Church. This was felt to be important as they were able to work together on common themes and share resources. One example was a contemplative spirituality group which attracts Christians from a range of beliefs. This group has been running for a number of years and meets regularly.

22.1.20 Working with and encouraging young people to engage in training was of interest to many we spoke with. However, there were concerns that some colleagues did not engage fully in this area of work due to lack of confidence. The example of Case Study 3 above provides an example of how engagement with courses can have a positive impact. 'Growing Young Leaders' was identified as a good course which supports the development of young people who might want to have more involvement in the church, but for some there was a lack of strategy about how to then use these young people to engage more fully with youth in the area. This was identified as a priority area for the future.

"You've got to engage with young people. Not at the expense of others but there's no excuse for us not doing it really and if we have to get rid of other things, so be it. But that's my own opinion and it's very important I think if rural Churches are going to flourish"

23.1 Progression and impact of training and development

23.1.1 There was a number of examples provided of where engagement in formal and informal courses has led to pursuit of licenced and authorised roles. The recognised Parish Assistant course (Case Study 2) for example has resulted in a number of people choosing to progress on to LLM roles or to be ordinands. The courses were able to build confidence, help participants to explore their faith further and to consider opportunities to engage more meaningfully with their church.

23.1.2 Other courses such as the Pilgrim course have been well received and have contributed to a number of opportunities for progression. Case study 7 demonstrates how the minister worked with congregation members to build their confidence. Through doing this he was hoping to be able to 'train the trainers' who would go out and build confidence and inspire others to take a more proactive leadership role.

> **CASE STUDY 7 The Pilgrim course**
>
> "We are currently doing the Pilgrim course. It's a sort of discipleship course. We've had consistently, I should think, probably fifteen or sixteen people come on that for the last year and a half. So we meet in blocks of six week and each week we look at something different. The material is all produced for you by the Church of England so it looks at things like the Lord's Prayer, the Eucharist, the Bible, the Ten Commandments, all those kind of building blocks of the Christian faith. And whilst that isn't explicit about teaching people to be a lay reader or a leader of worship, what I have found and we haven't quite finished yet, is that people are growing in their faith and in their confidence with God and with sharing the Gospel. It's something I'm just beginning to kind of wonder as we come to the end of the two year programme. What can we do with and for the sixteen or seventeen people rather than think you know we've come to the end...that was nice wasn't it? What do you do next? What will we do? What will we offer these people? What will we either ask that to do or what can we offer then. So I'm kind of looking at that around the Benefices because my hope is that we might be able to encourage at least some of them to take the Pilgrim group back to other people so they become the leaders of the next two year programme.

23.1.3 Although there were some examples provided of where there was a defined outcome in many situations this was not the case. Many respondents suggested that it was difficult to identify specific impacts and that it was a challenge to convert participation into active roles. Getting people together can have a positive impact however, it does not always lead to progression.

"We have done Alpha – problem is you get people across all the parishes – but you can't move them into what next. Can't then get them engaged in the church".

23.1.4 There was little evidence provided as to the need for courses or training needs being systematically identified. Formal training courses leading to license or authorisation were delivered centrally by Dioceses, although increasingly this was being decentralised. The informal courses in particular were usually constructed out of 'interest' or 'it might be good to do' then through an orchestrated 'this is what is needed'. It was very much an ad hoc approach to try and encourage people to become more involved. That said, often it works. Many of the case studies presented here demonstrate a range of outcomes.

23.1.5 There were some examples provided of how individuals have used their learning to develop new areas of work in the parish. In one parish for example (Case Study 8) through engaging in the Growing Leadership a participant took the initiative to set up an Open the Book Group. This was particularly welcomed by the minister and had become a sustained activity which was growing and developing outside of the purview of the clergy.

CASE STUDY 8 Progression

"One example is – one lady who had been on the Growing Leadership Course who had a lot of ability and was interested in a Bible Society Course called "Open the Book". She has organised a group that has been running for 3-years in a school where we had no contact at all. They've done assemblies, the school, staff and pupils love it – it's working really well.

This lady took on all the organisation of it and the team she created has sustained itself successfully without any input from me whatsoever. That is the ideal scenario. We can do things where they can be resourced appropriately. We have to play to people's strengths".

23.1.6   Although there is extensive training and development opportunities available, there were a couple of instances where more strategic approaches were being used to engage and develop lay leadership. Case Study 9 provides an example of how this is currently happening within the Church of England. The United Reformed Church is also currently engaged in a similar activity with a new resource which will focus on discipleship and aims to empower local churches. What these approaches present is a more systematic approach focusing on particular themes and prioritising them.

23.1.7   The example in case study 9 includes some thoughts on evaluation techniques, these will be useful when focusing on the impacts of the initiatives that are being adopted. The downside potentially is that as the focus is on strategic objectives, some of the existing best practice may be forgotten.

CASE STUDY 9 Strategic developments

"Leading your Church in Growth goes right across the board and so, a lot of time and effort is going into that in the parishes. It has existed on a national basis for over 20 years and what it's trying to do, is bring about numerical growth, spiritual growth and how churches support their communities. It's a very practically based course which starts with a Conference for clergy and Lay people – there is material that they can take back into their parishes/benefice to use locally to develop ideas and encourage good planning.

We are finding that this is working in the single parish context and multi-church. It's more complicated in the multi-church ones but it is usable which is great. There are two strands for measuring impact – one is the qualitative conversations we have with people which is largely about showing increased confidence, longer term what we will be looking at is average Sunday attendance and average weekly but will take a couple of years to really show up. We have certainly found very good engagement with people, which has given us confidence as a diocese to keep pushing on this".

24.1 Conclusions

24.1.1 This research has shown that whilst there are a wide variety of training courses and development opportunities available for lay people, there is little specifically for rural multi-church groups. The training can be categorised into three levels: formal leading to licence and authorised roles; formal bought in courses; and locally developed courses and mentoring. Participants in the study were all enthusiastic about encouraging people to engage and saw it as one of their roles. Many of the programmes have been developed generically for the various churches and were then customised to meet the needs of the various church communities.

24.1.2 The barriers to engagement in training are well recognised: geography, logistics and demographics of church goers can have an impact. Confidence was identified as the biggest barrier to people engaging in learning opportunities. For some the focus on formal training was a distraction from encouraging and supporting people to use their gifts. However, a range of strategies were adopted to address these and included developing of local activities, making activities fun and interactive, mentoring and role models were identified as good ways of empowering people to get involved in the church.

24.1.3 The research would suggest that having a range of training opportunities is important. A one size fits all approach is not appropriate. Introductory courses such as Start and Alpha generally worked well. Those who had engaged in Growing Leaders were able to evidence a range of positive outcomes that had contributed to the development of lay leadership. Offering a mixture of opportunities that are both formal and informal worked well. Mentoring in particular was identified as powerful for those who lacked confidence and also those who were new to roles or developing new skills.

24.1.4 In some areas there is a move towards focused strategic approaches. Although it will be necessary to assess the impact of these going forward and the extent to which they achieve their goals.

25.1   Recommendations

25.1.1   Consideration needs to be given to extending the number of formal training (eg. ALM and LLM) courses provided at a local level, as this research suggests that more people may be likely to engage as a result.

25.1.2   Greater consideration needs to be given to developing more mentoring opportunities for lay people. This was identified as a more productive route for building confidence than sending people on training courses.

25.1.3   Training in Mentoring would be of use to many rural ministers.

25.1.4   Informal approaches to training were identified has having greater impact and effectiveness. Opportunities to develop local informal courses should be considered as ways of building confidence and capacity and may lead to individuals taking on more formal roles.

25.1.5   When developing training, consideration should be given to a modular approach where there are several short courses that can be used to build confidence, reflection and experience throughout the learning process.

25.1.6   Bought in resources were identified as very useful, however they often need to be contextualised to the location and to the knowledge of the participants. Consideration should be given to the development of 'bite sized' on line learning resources. These could be topic related and provide a taster session for some of the more in-depth or formal training programmes.

25.1.7   Resources for training should be made accessible as e-documents, this would allow greater access and would make it easier for them to be amended and kept up to date. This would also facilitate a greater sharing of resources and materials.

25.1.8   Going forward it would be useful to identify and adopt strategies that will help assess and capture data on the types of opportunities that have the greatest impact.

RURAL MULTI-CHURCH MINISTRY BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW

26.1 The Context of Rural Church Life and Ministry

26.1.1 The overall literature on Church leadership reflects increasing concerns about challenges such as the securing of adequate resources to support paid ministry, the sustaining of inherited buildings, the finding of responsible officers, and the development of lay leadership. In facing the challenges of Christian presence, ministry and witness for the future, it is generally recognised that the Church needs to resolve the key issue of leadership and how best to support a new generation of leaders, both ordained and lay. While this is a general challenge for the Church, there are specific dimensions of this challenge that can be identified in relation to rural church life – in particular those dimensions that give rise to, and are reflected in, the increasing phenomenon of rural Multi-church Ministry (MCM).

26.1.2 A key contextual dimension is the changing composition of rural societies. This is a global phenomenon, reflected in literature also from beyond the United Kingdom (UK) and connects with the varied needs and demands of farming, mining and retirement communities (see Wells, 1912; Goreham, 1990 and Hughes *et al*., 2007). Due to these changes, the issues arising are being grappled with by Churches throughout the world. For example, as discussed by Lavelle (2005), in Australia, Church leadership faces a particularly changing context in rural communities where some are in rapid decline and others are growing, while in some communities there are people from many ethnic backgrounds as compared with others that are more mono-cultural.

26.1.3 The broader changes in the UK and particularly in England that have impacted upon the countryside have been examined in a series of reports by bodies such as those by the Carnegie Commission (2007); the Countryside Agency (2004); the Commission for Rural Communities (2006, 2007); and by individuals such as Howkins (1992); and Moseley (2003). The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2016) provides up-to-date explorations of rural England including the *Statistical Digest of Rural England* that cover a wide range of issues such as economic activities, types of employment, workforce, demographics, as well as earnings and skills in the rural communities. Within this broader rural setting, in England there are today at least 15,000 local churches in rural areas, belonging to at least seven denominations, and of which 10,199 are Anglican (Archbishops' Council, 2015), approximately 3,000 are Methodist, and around 450 are Baptist (Smith and Hopkinson, eds., 2012).

26.1.4 As well as giving relatively current data for churches in the countryside, Smith and Hopkinson's (2012) edited collection of essays titled *Faith and The Future of the Countryside: Pastoral and Theological Perspectives on Rural Sustainability* in many ways sets the scene and explores a range of current issues facing rural churches. The contributors argue that Christian Churches in the UK have always played a significant role in the countryside and that there is an inseparable relationship between Church life and the life of the wider rural community whose members are drawn from industry, agriculture and rural development and the emerging environmental lobby. The authors state that with a presence in almost every rural community, local rural churches are a living part of the countryside with a higher proportion (although lower absolute numbers) of people being involved in their local churches than is the case in urban areas. The volume offers a comprehensive exploration of community life and church life and the factors that mutually influence them, including in their interaction with one another. The chapters explore a range of relevant and significant themes including the changes in policy and economy, land use, food production and consumption, and in relation to the sustainability of rural communities. The authors argue that all these issues are profoundly important for the future of rural communities.

26.1.5 In relation to the Church in Britain more generally Callum Brown (2000) has written of *The Death of Christian Britain*. Although this title might arguably (at least in part) reflect an author's or publisher's hyperbole, the book makes its case not only in relation to the decline in numbers of Church members and worshippers, but also more generally in relation to the place of Christianity in British culture, while Brierley (1991; 2000; 2006) has written extensively on what would seem to be a general Church decline. In relation to the rural Church more specifically, Brierley (2008) highlighted the age profile of the rural Church; Rathge and Goreham (1989) reflected on the influence of economic and demographic factors when considering the viability of the rural Church; and Roberts and Francis (2006) examined trends in church closure and membership statistics across four Anglican rural dioceses indicating a decline in usual Sunday attendance together with electoral roll numbers of the remaining churches that may have led to increasing rates of church closure. Archbishops' Council (2015) gives up to date figures on growth and decline in rural Anglican churches.

26.1.6 In this context, a number of Church bodies have commissioned reports on the interface between the challenges of the changing countryside and the presence, ministry and witness of the Church. In the UK this has included the Church of England's *Faith in the Countryside* report (1990) and Released for Mission: Growing the Rural Church (2015) as well as other reports by the Baptist Union (1980); the Rural Theology Association (1989); the Church Army (2005a, 2005b) and Smith and Hopkinson (2012); as well as work by other bodies looking at faith in the countryside (see National Council of Voluntary Organisations/Commission for Rural Communities, 2007); and work by a range of individual thinkers (such as Francis, 1985; Cutts, 1990; Edmondson, 1991; Nott and Blofeld, 1991; Weston, 1991; Burrell, 1995; Bowden, 2003; Matineau; Francis, L. and Francis, P., 2004; Osborne, 2005; Gaze, 2006; Walker, 2006; Skuce, 2012; Francis and Robbins, eds., 2012; Crippen and Wood, 2012; and Francis, 2015).

26.1.7 The reflection that has been done on these changes and challenges takes place against the background of a real and an idealised historical inheritance (Russell, 1975; Thomas, 1991; Millar, 2004; and Duffy, 2005), both of which impact upon the development of contemporary rural Multi-church Ministry. Especially for the Church of England, with its historically strong tradition of geographically defined parishes (see Russell, 1986, 1993; Croft, ed. 2006), the image of the "country parson" rooted in a singular local community (de Balzac, 1914; Addison, 1947; Forbes, 1949; Verey, ed., 1978; Woodforde, 1978; Goodenough, 1983; Mullen, 1984; Francis, 1989; Osborne, 2004) has had a strong influence, although it is important to bear in mind that other Christian traditions – and particularly that of Methodism with ordained ministers serving "circuits" – have always had a broader geographical focus. Therefore, in ecumenical Christian perspective, the inherited patterns of rural ministry are much more varied than might be suggested either by popular historical memory or by traditional Anglican self-understandings and forms of organisation.

26.1.8 As in relation to the Church as a whole, so also in this broad rural context, and especially in the setting of Multi-church Ministry, the leadership resources available to a parish or congregation vary considerably from one community to another in terms of numbers of people involved, education levels and leadership capacity (Zook, 2014). The challenges also vary considerably and each individual leader can face unique obstacles within these common challenges (Black and Hughes, 2005; Stewart, 2008). In this context, it is also important to note that there is a gap in the literature that specifically deals with rural Multi-church Ministry leadership in the UK is very limited, with only a very few publications - such as Grundy (2015) and Martin (2011) seeking directly to address the issues. There is, however, a wider body of literature on this (Drury, 2003; Roxburgh and Romanuk, 2006; Cohall and Cooper, 2010; Canales, 2014; Miner *et al.*, 2015) that identifies a set of factors which may have implications for multi-church leadership in rural communities. As noted above, and explored further below, the factors are diverse and some may be evident within churches themselves, while others affect the ways they operate in relation to their communities (Hughes *et al.*, 2007).

26.1.9 From within broader leadership theory, among some of the key issues identified are 'social divisions' (Smith, 2005), which suggest that beneath and within any apparent equality, there are some people who hold more power than others. Specifically in relation to many rural communities, Dempsey (1990) noted that there can be certain families who tend to hold leadership positions, formally and informally, sometimes over generations. At the same time, the increasing shift in population due to emigration to and from cities in search of employment, cheap housing and civil duties, greatly influences the environment within which the rural churches carry out their witness and provides their services and also the leadership resources available.

26.1.10 Writing from within the Australian context, but with relevance also the UK, Black and Hughes (2005:160) argue that these population changes create and embed the '*distinctions between long-term residents, professional "blow-ins" such as those who may come into the community to offer professional services like education or medical services for a short period of time, and itinerant people*'. Thus the decline in population numbers in certain rural communities, due to ageing of the population, taken together with a decline in incomes, and an increase in the population that tends to be transient, coastal, tourist-oriented or retirement-oriented (Hughes *et al*, 2007), significantly influences the leadership responsibilities and the resources available to churches. In Australia, due to declining rural populations, ordained clergy have necessarily had to assume responsibility for increasingly larger areas and clusters of congregations/parishes (Lavelle, 2005).

26.1.11 In Francis' 1996 research on church leadership in rural churches in the UK highlighted that similar developments have been at work here arguing that young, educated people who are capable of leadership and further education may leave their local communities in pursuit of study and higher paying employment in the large cities, and that this is another factor that can have a significant bearing on leadership potential and capacity in rural multi-church contexts. In other words, that those who remained in rural communities at that time tended to be people with lower levels of formal education and leadership capacity. In the 1990s rural communities in which he conducted his research, Francis found that there were comparatively few people who were entrepreneurial, and who had the initiative and the ability to be agents for religious or social change. In such a context, empirical studies including those by Rolph and Rolph (2008); Rolph 2009; and Rolph et al (2014), have examined stress among rural Church leaders; while Brewster (2008) looked at how happy rural Anglican clergy were; and Rutledge (2006) examined hidden signs of burnout in the practice of ministry among rural clergy, while Rolph et al (2009) examine the pressures involved in rural ministry. In relation specifically to rural Multi-church Ministry, Brewster et al (2011) examine the personality profile of Anglican clergy involved in multi-parish rural ministry, while Robbins and Francis (2014) look more specifically at the phenomenon of "burnout" among such clergy. In this context, Francis et al (2000) have sought to develop a workbook on *Rural Ministry* as have Francis and Martineau (2002).

26.1.12 It is, however, at least debatable as to how universally applicable these factors are in the UK of two decades later than when Francis conducted his work. For example, Russell (1986 and 1993) has argued that multi-church groups were primarily formed not due to a lack of lay leadership potential, but due to a declining number of ordained ministers and reducing finances. In addition, the latest data from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2016) suggests that rural England is unique in the European Union in having a rural population growth of between 30,000-50,000 people, including a growing number of skilled and professional people who choose to live in the countryside (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2016).

26.1.13 Again written from within the Australian context but arguably also with relevance to the UK, Hughes and Black (1999) and Hughes *et al.*, (2007) argue that the contemporary change in the nature of religion from being a central part of the culture to being more of a set of resources for individuals and groups has had a profound impact upon models of church leadership and their implementation, although the rate of such change has generally been faster in urban communities and slower in rural ones. In other words, '*although religious faith is seen as the basis for community, frequent attendance is often seen as something for the enthusiastic, rather than as necessary*' (Hughes *et al.*, 2007: 25). But in comparison with Australia where Hughes and Black (1999: 303) also note that this change in religious belief '*has led to the situation that, in rural areas, there tends to be a higher level of identification with religion, but attendances at churches are generally lower than in the cities*', in England, even though the numbers are lower overall, a higher proportion of the rural population attend church.

26.1.14 Lay people's attitudes towards, and perceptions of, ordained clergy also influence the context within which the Church functions and delivers services in both rural and urban settings. Research conducted by the Christian Research Association (Thompson and Hughes, 2006) among lay leaders in the Uniting Church in rural parts of New South Wales, Australia, found that many lay leaders felt that they were not accepted in the same way as ordained clergy. Lay leaders reported that when they visited churchgoers, their visit was not considered equal to that of an ordained minister. The findings further note that when the lay leaders led a service, they were not given the same respect as a minister. Bouma (1999) goes a step further arguing that in contemporary society, religion is considered something personal and something that

you do yourself, and thus religious professionals' are irrelevant to contemporary life issues. Hughes *et al.*, (2007: 89) in a similar terminology argue that today's society has become increasingly specialised and are in general made up of 'expert systems' in which everyone has their own specialised contribution. As noted by Davies (1991), this change may have an implication for church leadership in that there may be growing social expectations that discourage the use of non-specialist lay people for the leadership of churches.

26.1.15 Given this changing environment, the leadership models reviewed here are selected for their relevance to this study and are not intended to represent a comprehensive, or even representative, sample of all available theories or models, but rather offer a basis for understanding leadership in contemporary rural Multi-church Ministry.

27.1 Leadership Models and Wider Contemporary Society

27.1.1 This section mainly draws on the literature concerning leadership theories that are not specifically developed for the rural multi-church contexts (Northouse, 2007). Since leadership is a complex human process involving people with differing responsibilities and abilities in a variety of contexts there are both differences and similarities between leadership in the Church and leadership in any other organisation. There are similarities in terms of the social and psychological factors and organisational dynamics that apply to all organisations, including the Church (Kelderman *et al.*, 2005). But there are differences, too, in that from an internal perspective, for example according to Kelderman *et al.* (2005), *'church is a unique organisation in which Christ and the Spirit dwell. The church has a unique source of life, is directed toward particular ends and goals, and is governed by particular commitments and practices—such as prayer, worship, study, witness, and service—that give peculiar shape to the church's life and ministry.'*

27.1.2 In understanding the interplay between these, the approach taken to the phenomenon of what is usually known as "religion" by the historian of religion, Wilfred Cantwell Smith is one that offers helpful insight. Cantwell Smith (1978) sees religion as being composed of the elements of the "personal faith" of the individual and also the "cumulative tradition" with which an individual engages and from which they draw – which "cumulative tradition" has been formed by the commentaries, liturgies, symbols and rites that together have provided an historical means of transmission of the "personal faith" of the wider community of believers. As Trevor Ling argued in a 1974 book chapter on *"Communalism and the Social Structure of Religion",* this approach could be still further enriched by taking more account of the structuring of "personal faith" and "cumulative tradition" into a variety of *institutional* forms. Thus, in referring to Cantwell Smith's schema, Ling (1974: 72) noted that: *".... I am inclined to think that his scheme needs supplementing; one needs to know more about the structure of the vast intervening area of institutions and organisations that extends between the personal faith of the individual and the cumulative tradition "* and thus that the organisational forms of a religion are a much more highly significant part of the content of a religion than they are often given credit for.

27.1.3 Thus organisational forms are a major part of what a "community" consists of, and in the case of the Christian Churches, these organisational forms include both those of specific local parishes and congregations and of the wider structures of the Church, such as Deaneries, Circuits, Dioceses, Districts and Synods. They are significant nodes in the network of relationships between the bearers of "personal faith". They form the social and historical meeting-points between such "personal faith" and the "cumulative tradition." They are also the public face that the "cumulative tradition" presents to the world and are one of the principal means through which that "cumulative tradition" and the holders of "personal faith" try to mediate and negotiate their reality with all other social realities.

27.1.4 Leadership theories - whether more generally or more specifically in Church contexts - are in constant evolution. They also tend to draw together a range of inter-related fields and detailed approaches to leadership, leadership development, and leadership competency frameworks that are used in a wide range of organisations. Equally, factors such as globalisation, demographic changes, technology and the public's increasing needs and expectations from their local institutions (including churches) are constantly shifting (Bass and Avolio, 2004).

27.1.5 Willimon (2002) also argues that the Church cannot be explained in general organisational terms alone and therefore must guard against approaches to leadership that merely accommodate to the broader culture. For example, in relation to evaluations of "success" or "failure" in leadership it is important to have a critically reflexive awareness of what might inform evaluations of this kind, and especially so if lessons are to be drawn from this in relation to the context of the Church where, in many ways, a different set of norms and values are at least appealed to. Thus, for example, success or lack of success might look quite different in a Church context in which the business motivation of maximising profits for the shareholders is not present, or at least not in the more limited sense of financial profits. It is also important to recognise that there are differences in the relationships between those who are leaders and those who are led when considered within an employment context as compared with in a more voluntary and community sector setting.

27.1.6 Even apart from these specific factors, the literature shows that leadership is, in general, a contested field and a weakness of most of the studies relates to the lack of precision in the definition of leadership used (Dopson et al., 2016). Thus various authors have proposed differing definitions of leadership. Stogdill's 1950 article was one of the early works that had a profound impact on theory and research development in the field of leadership. He (Stogdill 1950: 3) defined leadership as *'the process (act) of influencing activities of an organised group in its efforts towards goal setting and goal achievement.'* Similarly, Northouse (2007: 3) defines leadership as *'a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.'* Dopson *et al.*, (2016) state that leadership can be understood as a process, tool, and practice of influence relating to what Smircich and Morgan (1982) call the "management of meaning"; what Grint (2005) calls "social construction"; what Fairhurst (2011) calls the "framing of organisational context"; or Denis *et al.* (2012) refer to as "contextually situated 'practice'".

27.1.7 Some authors (for example, Nohria and Khurana, 2010) criticise the field for its relative neglect of empirical research, as in their editing of a Harvard Business School's centennial colloquium aimed at stimulating serious scholarly research and filling the intellectual neglect in the field of leadership. Pfeffer (2015: 32), too, criticises what he calls "the leadership industry" arguing that in the current context where only little rigorous research exists, "*the preaching, storytelling, inspirational and aspirational character so common in leadership makes things worse in numerous ways.*" As a result, Nohria and Khurana (2010), contend that the current studies on leadership theories' development and practice are fragmented and that setting a serious agenda for future research is necessary. Bearing in mind this diversity leadership theories that are selected for review and consideration are necessarily limited.

28.1 "Charismatic" leadership theory

28.1.1 "Charismatic" leadership is a term that became known in the leadership studies initially

with the work of Max Weber, in a chapter on "The Nature of Charismatic Authority and its Routinization" in his book 1922 book *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (translated into English under the title *Theory of Social and Economic Organisation*). Weber described certain leaders as having exceptional qualities - a "charisma" - that enabled them to motivate followers to achieve outstanding or demonstrate exceptional performance. *Charisma* is a Greek word meaning *'gift bestowed by the gods'* (Klein and House 1998: 12), a word later used in the context of the theology and practice of the Christian Church in relation to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Weber argued that charisma was 'external' to individuals, and ultimately resulted from excellent communication and interpersonal skills, which in turn could be learned and developed. As an adaptation of a theological concept, Weber's model is an explanation for what sometimes happens in complex organisations - especially in times of crisis. According to Weber's terminology, when a leader demonstrates a set of unique characteristics to salvage an organisation or a community from crisis, and are accorded recognition by colleagues and subordinates for having operated according to a special gift instead of by organisational authority, the title of charismatic leader is appropriate (Sashkin and Sashkin, 1990).

28.1.2   Charismatic leadership theory has been examined and tested in different contexts which has led to a lively – at times contentious – debate. Conger and Kanungo (1998) characterise charisma as the ability to elaborate and convey an unconventional, yet clear, vision that leads to the betterment of subordinates. Bess and Goldman (2001: 431) note that the defining elements of charismatic leadership are *'special personal characteristics leaders possess that interact with the perceptions and needs of followers at a given point in time.'* According to Klein and House (1998), there are certain personal characteristics and behaviours of leaders that *'light a fire'* among subordinates and certain individuals possess and exercise such unique characteristics as pro-social assertiveness, self-confidence, and integrity and are able to accurately identify the need for social cohesion, moral conviction, and concern for the moral exercise of power.

28.1.3   House *et al.*, (1991) conducted an intensive review of six field studies and noted that charismatic leaders exhibited such characteristics as high levels of energy, endurance, work involvement, enthusiasm, cognitive-achievement oriented values, strong tendencies to be creative, innovative, intelligent, visionary and inspirational tendencies, and self-confidence. According to Gibson (1999), charismatic leaders are encouraging, assertive, and socially sensitive. They are also considerate of followers' needs, demonstrate a high desire for change, and have a propensity to take risks. Klein and House (1998, 4–5) arguing in a similar terminology contend that charismatic leaders exhibit and exercise a good degree of *'articulation of distal ideological goals, articulation of a visionary mission that is discrepant from the status quo, confidence in followers, communication of high expectations, emphasis on symbolic and expressive aspects of the task, references to the collective and collective identity, and assumption of personal risks and sacrifices.'*

28.1.4   House (1977), who studied the psychological motives behind transformational leadership, found that charisma is the ability of specific individuals to inspire and motivate followers to be committed to their ideology, perform at high levels in organisation and be naturally drawn to them. House notes that charisma is the central aspect of a transforming leader. He concluded that there are four key phrases that define and safeguard the influence of charismatic leadership, and include:

- Dominant
- Strong desire to influence others
- Self-confident
- Strong sense of one's own moral values. (quoted in Drury, 2003: 8)

28.1.5   Conger (1989) expanded the models developed by House (1977) and proposed a four-stage model of charismatic leadership which he attributed to specific qualities in specific people and which are not generally exhibited by all who tend to be managing or leading an

organisation or another form of collective. Conger's (1989) model includes:

- Continual assessment of the environment to formulate what must be done; establishes goals
- Communication of his or her vision; uses motivational and persuasive arguments
- Building trust and commitment; unexpected behaviour, risk-taking; technical proficiency
- Role modelling, empowerment, and unconventional tactics. (quoted in Drury, 2003: 8)

28.1.6   Drury (2003), who ties together a wide range of literature in relation to Church leadership, argues that charismatic leaders are generally spurred to action by ideology and vision, or by crisis, and they usually take on hero status with their followers, employees, and sometimes nations. In other words, charismatic leaders possess the capability to inspire and share vision, respond to disaster promptly with confidence, and are unique in leading successfully through the storm. Bass (1985), Sashkins (2003), and Hughes *et al.*, (2007), who have researched in depth the charisma component of transformational leadership and have provided clear applications and cautions of charismatic leadership, conclude that there is no universally accepted set of behaviours and traits that define charismatic leadership. However, they do identify certain characteristics that indicate successful charismatic leadership including the awareness of, and ability to avoid, personal weaknesses such as narcissistic tendencies. A failure to delegate, unpredictability, freedom from the inner conflicts that most leaders have with hard decisions, and insensitivity to others that, within this leadership style, can cause failure.

28.1.7   Overall, there is a general consensus in the literature that charismatic leadership is a unique quality exhibited only by certain people and is derived from the charisma of the leader. It is contrasted with two other types of authority - legal authority and traditional authority. In other words, the focus of charismatic leadership is on the ability of the leader to articulate and vision a viable future for organisation and subordinates and to gain their commitment to its implementation. Put differently, charismatic leadership exhibits certain behavioural attributes which are unique to them and include a strong sense of vision and articulation, sensitivity to the environment, sensitivity to member needs, personal risk taking, and performing unconventional behaviour. In conclusion, by possessing these specific characteristics, charismatic leaders are able to instil both commitment to ideological goals and also devotion to themselves and thus remain authoritative, persuasive and distinct from the wider group within which the charismatic leadership functions.

29.1.   Transactional leadership

29.1.1   Transactional leadership, as an approach that contrasts with both charismatic leadership (as discussed above) and transformative leadership (as discussed further below), and is highly contingent on rewards and on management by exception (Bass and Avolio, 1994). Numerous authors (including, for example, Bass, 1985 and Northouse, 2007) argue that the exchange process through which leaders help followers accomplish objectives is what constitutes the core element of transactional leadership. In other words, transactional leadership creates an environment where mutual gain due to the transaction or exchange that occurs is optimal - in which the subordinates exchange work for the leader's granting of reward. Cohall and Cooper (2010), who tested the correlation of perception between leadership roles, leadership styles and job satisfaction, conclude that there is a strong correlation between transactional leadership and job satisfaction and effectiveness.

29.1.2   Burns (1978) argued that the transactional leadership model involves the practice of management-by-exception and contingent reward. In contrast to charismatic and transformational leaders, transactional leaders tend to work at a micro-level, setting

performance standards and conducting performance reviews for their followers, granting them rewards in exchange for their performance. Avolio and Bass (2004) note that transactional leaders focus more on a series of transactions to achieve organisational objectives, and also recognise what associates and subordinates need and desire. Transactional leaders also seek to meet business needs by clarifying how those needs and desires will be satisfied if the associates and subordinates put in the effort required by the task. Transactional leaders are attracted to 'stick and carrot' behaviour and exchange benefits with their subordinates, using a sense of duty with rewards and punishments in order to reach goals (Bass, 1985). In other words, transactional leadership is more goal-oriented than process-oriented, and in this case, the ultimate goal is to grow the organisation and make benefits for stakeholders regardless of the process of its attainment (Canales, 2014).

29.1.3   Drury (2003) refers to transactional leadership as "path-goal" model in which the transactional leaders help their subordinates identify what must be done to achieve the goal. Shanlian (2013) who has analysed a large body of literature on leadership theories, writes that transactional leaders manage for results; transformational leaders engage constituents to motivate and raise the level of morality; while charismatic leaders empower associates and subordinates to achieve goals. There are two main elements of transactional leadership style that are generally referred to in the leadership literature. These include:

- **Contingent reward**. This is used by leadership as a motivating force to recognise and reward associates or subordinates for the achievement of goals. Through this approach, leaders seek to build personal and social identification in the organisation or group with the mission and goals of the leader and organisation. Drury (2003), Avolio and Bass (2004), and Shanlian (2013) note that contingent reward is the belief that a follower's reinforcement is contingent on accomplishing objectives and will result in higher performance and satisfaction.

- **Management-by-exception**. Management by exception is most prevalent in financial institutions. It is usually concerned with the financial and operational results of a business. The management-by-exception approach dictates that organisational and group issues must be brought to the attention of management only when results represent substantial differences from the planned outcomes and allocated resources. In other words, this concept sees the leader as only getting involved with the follower when there is an exception - when the agreed-upon objectives are not being accomplished (Drury, 2003). This means that the influence in leader-follower exchanges such as these are likely to be minimal and generally occur in a passive form. This style of leadership has therefore been criticised on the basis that management-by-exception may harm the efforts of an organisation's or a group's efforts, because within this approach, leader-follower exchanges (which take a more central place in other theories of leadership) are infrequent. However, Cohall and Cooper (2010), and Canales (2014), note that the management-by-exception approach not only takes a passive rather in an active form, but also that while watching follower performance more closely, it nevertheless only corrects and does not provide other, formative, feedback.

30.1.   Transformational leadership theory

30.1.1   James MacGregor Burns (1978) introduced the idea of transformational leadership in the late 1970s. The constructs were embraced by Bernard Bass (1985) and Bass *et al*. (1987) to the extent that it is currently one of the dominant theories of leadership in use. Applying this with

special reference to the context of Christian youth leadership, Canales (2014) notes that one of the most widespread approaches and successful models for leadership in contemporary public and private organisations, large and small, is transformational leadership. Canales' argument about the widespread significance and application of transformational leadership resonates with Bryman (1992) who argued that in the era where organisations are increasingly expanding and the demands for delivering results are mounting, transformational leadership constitutes part of the 'new leadership' paradigm.
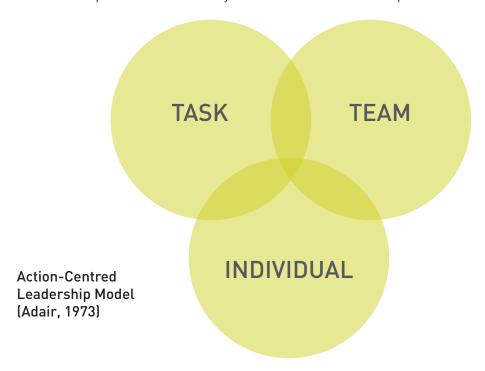
30.1.2   As the transformational theory of leadership has evolved and has been analysed through different prisms and put to test in different contexts, its application has shown some significant similarities and some differences. According to Yammarino and Bass (1990), transformational leaders are characterised as those who articulate a vision of the future that can be shared with peers and subordinates, provides intellectual stimulation to subordinates and pays attention to differences among people. These authors write that the key characteristic of transformational leadership is its ability permanently to instigate aspiration and transform individual, collective and organisational ethos and visions. In Christian leadership contexts, Drury (2003), Canales (2014), and Cohall and Cooper (2010) all note, using similar terminologies, that transformational leadership needs many of the same skills as charismatic leadership, but the focus is more of a contingency view. According to Mannarelli (2006), a transformational leader exhibits charisma, empathy, vision, and a source of inspiration. Moreover, Aviolo and Yammarino (2002), note that supportive, participative and achievement-oriented leadership visions and commitment are also among the attributes and characteristics of modern charismatic transformational leadership. In the words of Shanlian (2013: 20), 'a transformational leader seeks to empower each subordinate/follower by coaching and caring … is closely tied with authentic, steward, servant, and charismatic leadership theories.'

30.1.3   Burns (1978) further developed his idea about transformational leadership arguing that a core attribute of transformational leadership is the ability to engage with followers in such a way as to surpass their expectations and to raise each other's moral commitment. Krames (2005), drawing on Burns, notes that among the authentic leadership attributes is that strong leaders have infectious enthusiasm in winning followers' commitment and occupying their hearts and minds in a way that acts as a multiplier to stimulate the workforce to increase organisational capabilities. Hunter, (2004) and Canales (2014) argue along similar lines that leaders' ability to instigate aspiration and motivation in an organisation stimulates workers' enthusiasm to invest more energy and commitment in doing their jobs and in this way enhances organisational spirit and outputs. Hunter (2004) listed the motivational elements that constitute key parts of transformational leadership theory to include recognition, praise, appreciation, opportunity for growth, and job satisfaction, and argues that in organisations in which these abound, the innovative spirit of the workforce is high.

30.1.4   Warren (2002), who puts this to test in a religious context, says an example of a transformational Christian leader might be someone who has the trait, charisma, and the ability to encourage Christians to find a purpose for their lives. This line of argument resonates well with that of other authors such as Aviolo and Yammarino (2002) who argue that to be transformational and to transform individuals, a leader must understand the needs and motivations of their subordinates and provide them with the socio-psychological support necessary for them to move forward and act for the organisation. In a Christian and Church context this means that a transformational leader takes responsibility for supporting followers in expanding their individual world view, strengthening their commitment to God, to the Church and to securing their perseverance for the benefit of their communities. For a leader to serve his or her people through creating a process of individual transformation

is critical because the transformation of the individual will result in the transformation of the Church as an organisation and the community in general. Thus, tying together all the characteristics that are identified in the literature as being common traits of transformational leadership, four key elements can be identified that contribute and these include:

- Charisma or idealised influence, meaning that leaders are strong role models and make others want to follow their vision.
- Inspirational Motivation, meaning that leaders communicate high expectations and use emotional appeals.
- Intellectual Stimulation, meaning that leaders challenge followers to develop innovative ways of problem-solving.
- Individualised Consideration, meaning that leaders pay attention to individual needs and assign meaningful projects to help followers grow personally. (Drury, 2003: 18).

31.1. Action-Centred Leadership Model

31.1.1 The action-centred leadership model is attributed to John Adair (2005) and is praised for its simplicity and utility in providing a useable framework for leadership and management in a group or team setting. This theory's attraction and wide application lie in the fact that it is easy to remember, apply and adapt (Canales, 2014). According to this theory, good managers and leaders need to have full command of the three main areas of the action-centred or *'three-circle'* leadership model. Adair (1977: 21) further argues that *'being able to keep the right balance between the three core areas of task, team and individual, gets results, builds morale, improves quality, develops team working and is the mark of a successful manager and leader.'* Recent theorists (Russell, 2001; Drury, 2003; Agosto, 2005), note that the action-centred model of leadership relates well to the demands of modern day leadership, is adaptable and can be used in many and varied team situations, and in this way it has proved to be a useful and efficient leadership framework.

31.1.2 According to John Adair, there are three elements in all leadership situations. They are:

- **The achievement of a goal or task**. One of the major characteristics of a successful leadership team is their ability to influence the leadership skills of all team members

Action-Centred
Leadership Model
(Adair, 1973)

within the organisational hierarchy in order to meet organisational demands. This ability is perceived to be unique yet highly significant and a complex element of the overall effective leadership and organisational performance. Since the inception of organisations and the organisational approach to achieving results and delivering services, leaders are tasked with effectively guiding organisational goal achievement, while considering the team member skills necessary to produce the desired output (Stark, 2015). The completion of a small or large activity with either a very practical or less tangible goal, constitutes the core part of a leadership's responsibility. In order to achieve goals, leaders need to ensure that groups can be effective by having clear shared goals that are valued and striven for by all members. Often it can be the completion of the task and the rewards attributed to this that can bring the group together in the first place and maximise the output – and the leader plays the critically important part in this.

- **The group of people performing the task**. Engaging all members in completing tasks has been praised as an effective tool to achieve results and enhance organisational performance. This is because teamwork offers a variety of benefits to the organisation and its staff and promotes the culture of task delegation and mutual confidence. It also helps all members to understand each other and learn how to work together. Teamwork facilitates the formation and consolidation of work groups and teams and helps organisations to develop systems that allow them to complete tasks efficiently and quickly. In other words, sharing tasks between teams and members reduces the danger of tasks falling to less-trained members and ensures that the abilities of the team and its members are accurately identified and tasks are appropriately allocated so that the task can be completed quickly and efficiently. Teamwork helps relationship and confidence building among the members and the leadership that in turn brings ideas to life and creates a support mechanism to test these ideas and support their implementation. Teamwork also helps in resolving challenges and reduces the costs of doing so. Therefore, the culture of teamwork and the team itself must be understood as an entity in its own right and a significant driver of organisational achievement.

- **Each individual member of the group involved in the task**. As discussed in the previous section, promoting the culture of teamwork constitutes the key element of successful leadership and organisational achievement, but in a context in which, while the group will take on a life of its own, individuals do not lose their own identity. This means that the ideas of individuals must be heard and valued; their needs must be met; and at all times they should be asked to share their opinions and raise their concerns. Since members - both as individuals and groups - play a critical role in organisational development and achievement, their allegiance to the group and organisation and their motivation to accomplish tasks and deliver results must be developed and sustained.

32.1   Servant Leadership Theory

32.1.1   In Christian leadership literature, servant leadership theory is dominant. It is seen as being patterned on the life, ministry and leadership of Jesus and the early Christian leaders and is praised for its spirit and characteristic of attending to the needs of the constituency before those of the leader. Servant leadership is built on a philosophy and set of practices that endure to enrich the lives of individuals and communities, cure the pains of sufferers, build better organisations and ultimately to create a more just and caring world.

32.1.2   Robert Greenleaf is often credited for initiating a current interest in servant leadership that extends beyond the sphere of specifically Christian organisations. Thus Greenleaf's (1977) thesis saw business leaders as needing to serve society more constructively than merely

by increasing profits for the company. Greenleaf expressed concern about the delegation of human well-being to secondary status in the face of growing demands for leaders to produce greater benefit for organisations. In contemporary society caring is now often mediated through institutions that are large, changing, complex, powerful, and profit-driven, are not always competent and can sometimes be corrupt and can engage in ways of conducting their business that violate human rights. In such a context, a leadership that focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong becomes imperative. Greenleaf (1977: 142) further argues that *'business exists as much to provide meaningful work to the person as it exists to provide a product or service to the customer.'*

32.1.3   Fairholm (1997) drawing on Greenleaf (1977) notes that servant leadership is a theoretical framework that advocates a leader's primary motivation and role as service to others. Fairholm (1997: 12) argues that *'spirituality is a key element in religious society, especially in its leaders – and this is because – the secret of leadership founded on spirit is that the leader is a servant first.'* According to this theory of leadership the philosophy of a leader's greatness only originates from the degree and quality of care they project to their followers, associates and subordinates and their leadership begins when a leader assumes the position of servant in these interactions. Smith (2005: 4), writing about Greenleaf's approach, argues that *'authentic, legitimate leadership arises not from the exercise of power or self-interested actions, but from a fundamental desire to first help others.'* He concludes that servant leadership theory puts at its heart the fundamental ideas of service to others, holistic approach to work, promoting a sense of community and sharing of power in decision-making. In other words, servant leadership theory is foremost value-driven. It is because of this characteristic – which constitutes the core of this theory – that it is widely praised for its adherence to the profound spiritual and moral underpinnings that are in turn critically important for the well-being of individuals and organisations in a religious or spiritual setting. Thus, as in other theories of leadership, values lie at the core of servant leadership philosophy and shape its characteristics, impact activities and decision-making behaviour that finally leads to organisational and community well-being.

32.1.4   Theorists (Russell, 2001; Stone, *et al*., 2003; Agosto, 2005) argue that effective leadership attributes grow out of the inner values and beliefs of individual leaders which are independent variables that define and shape servant leader behaviour. They further argue that these values are critically important and are known to have substantial impact on the resulting culture and performance of an organisation and as well as communities. Biblical scholar Agosto (2005: 53) notes that *'Jesus' leadership style concentrated on service, '[he] focused his attention on the poor and the outcast, those suffering the most, those to whom nobody, not even established political and religious leaders who could help, pays attention.'* According to Spears (1998, 4–6), servant leadership theory holds that these characteristics that are to be found in servant-leadership organisations and institutions: *'listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualisation, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community.'*

32.1.5   In general, the literature on servant leadership theory – particularly those theorists who emphasis on the spirituality of leadership – identify the following characteristics common that weave all diverse theories together, and include:

- Value People – by listening receptively, serving the needs of others first, and trusting people
- Develop People – by providing opportunities for learning, modelling appropriate behaviour and building up others through encouragement
- Build Community – by building strong relationships, working collaboratively and valuing individual differences
- Display Authenticity – by integrity and trust, openness and accountability and a willingness to learn from others
- Provide Leadership – by envisioning the future, taking initiative and clarifying goals
- Share Leadership – by creating a shared vision, sharing decision-making power and sharing status and privilege at all levels of the organisation. (Drury, 2003: 21)

33. 1 Oversight Leadership

33.1.1 Continuing in relation to leadership approaches articulated with more specifically Christian references, as argued by an Anglican priest having responsibility for a group of five churches *"The role of the priest is to support the ministry of the church, not to do it."* (private communication with Jill Hopkinson). In the context of rural multi-church groups, the limited literature in this area suggests that mission, ministry and leadership now and in the future, will be a shared endeavour between lay and ordained (Hopkinson, 2015: 52).

32.1.2 From a clergy perspective, "oversight ministry" is about: "exercising ministry through and with others rather than taking on the responsibility for doing everything oneself." (Rowe, 2017) The ministry of oversight is thus lay and ordained working together, with leadership offered, usually by the ordained person, that facilitates, enables and encourages the ministry of lay people to be the body of Christ and do the work of the Church in a particular place.

33.1.3 Hopkinson comments that this shared approach is also likely to be ecumenical, as well as requiring significant change by both ordained and lay in how leadership responsibilities are exercised. (Hopkinson, 2015: 52). The ministry of oversight within the Anglican tradition is something that has a growing interest, particularly with prevalence and increase in size of (rural) multi-church groups, but Methodist Ministers have been operating this style of ministry for a very long time, Grundy (2015: 52) provides a helpful discussion of the history of oversight ministry, starting with the *episkopos*, a state official to '"see over" a city or region on behalf of others. Thus Grundy (2015: 52-58) concludes that local ministry in contemporary multi-congregational settings requires the involvement of all in mission and ministry.

33.1.4 Greenwood has been advocating the local lay ministry and oversight approach for over 20 years (see Greenwood, 2000; 2002; and 2006), most recently in *Being Church: the Formation of Christian Community* (2013) and *Sharing God's Blessing: How to Renew the Local Church* (2016). Greenwood advocates the participatory approach to being church as a core value that comes from being part of the body of Christ. He sees church as primarily and essentially communal, called into being by God's word and the sacraments, becoming a member through baptism. (Greenwood, 2016: 38) His fundamental principle is that each baptised Christian and baptising Christian community, is given the gifts for mission and ministry, and has the opportunity to share in this important work. (Greenwood, 2016: 39)

33.1.5 Within the Methodist Church the ministry of lay people is well established and respected. Every Methodist Church has one or more Stewards responsible for ensuring that worship takes place and to act as local leaders. There are established lay roles such as local preacher,

worship leader or pastoral visitor, as well as Circuit roles to help different churches in the Circuit work together. (The Methodist Church, 2005).

33.1.6   The so-called "Lima Document" on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* recognises that across all denominations baptism is a sign of common discipleship. (World Council of Churches Faith and Order Commission, 1982: 3). It also describes the ministries of oversight and how they may be exercised through personal, collegial and communal activity. (World Council of Churches Faith and Order Commission, 1982: 25-26) and that "Clergy and leaders bear vital and particular responsibility for helping Christian people to be Church in various ways" (World Council of Churches Faith and Order Commission, 1982: 25-26), as all are called by God to be mission disciples Greenwood, 2016: 39). The practical outworking of this is the local priest, who acts as navigator, helping the congregation to relate to its wider community, and being a facilitator, energising groups from the congregation, and must see this role as enabling the task of the whole Church in relation to the world. (Greenwood, 2009: 90).

33.1.7   Describing the rationale for oversight ministry, Heywood (2017) argues that *"our inherited model of ministry sees full-time stipendiary ordained ministry as the standard form of ministry and all other forms of ministry as auxiliary optional extras. The model of ministry towards which I see us travelling sees local ministry, lay and ordained, as the standard form of ministry, and the full-time clergy called, along with others, to enable, resource and connect the ministry of all."*

33.1.8   It is also clear that change is expected at every level, as Heywood further states:

- The change is not simply a pragmatic response to the falling number of clergy available; it also has a coherent theological rationale, which emerges from a vision of the church in mission and the collaborative nature of ministry.
- It involves a change in style as well as structure: a change of culture, not just a new way of managing.
- Oversight ministry involves engaging with complexity and building networks of relationship.
- Lay people may be called to oversight ministry as well as clergy, usually in the context of collaborative teams.(Heywood, 2017)

33.1.9   To support these statements Heywood highlights the experience of the Diocese of Monmouth whose clergy have been receiving training in oversight ministry.

"For these men and women the transition is hard: it involves letting go of parts of the traditional vicar's role and delegating them to others; shouldering new tasks and learning new skills; leading their churches in the change of culture required. But where they have successfully drawn others into shared ministry, opportunities for mission have opened up, communities have been impacted and churches grown." (Heywood, 2017)

33.1.10   In addition to the ministry of oversight, Heywood suggests that two other forms of ministry are necessary: focal ministry – a person or team who are the face of the church for congregation and community; and specialist ministries such as children and young people, chaplaincy, training etc. Importantly Heywood concludes by suggesting that oversight ideally needs to be held by a team rather than a single person. This is particularly important given the range of tasks to be completed, the skills needed and the complexity that will inevitably arise of providing oversight leadership in a rural multi-church group. (Hopkinson, 2015: 56-58).

34.1   **Training for Rural Multi-church Ministry**

34.1.1   Research published by Arthur Rank Centre (ARC) on rural life and faith (Martin, 2011) argues that training for rural multi-church ministry is *"the single biggest gap in resources or training identified by all sorts of respondents from every denomination survey involved multi-church ministry."* At the same time, however, Martin (2011) identifies some examples of good practice across five denominations, and including in relation to multi-church ministry. Among other things, Martin states that (ARC) staff and its resources have been highly valued by users and that its resources need to be disseminated much more widely. Martin also noted that its multi-church ministry workshops were seen as highly useful in terms of their specific content but were valued for developing an ecumenical ethos, building confidence, and grounding general training in rural specifics. At the same time, it was noted that they were quite intense and that more time was needed for unpacking their content.

34.1.2   Martin further noted that in rural contexts, hands-on-experiences, networking and groups are greatly valued and play a significant part in initial or ongoing ministerial formation, alongside one-to-one mentoring, and learning in small group contexts. According to Martin (2011: 4), *'local or regional groups, ecumenical or denominational, play a key role in supporting rural ministry and networking is valuable, especially for those in isolated contexts.'* He also noted that sharing experiences and reflections with others in similar contexts is essential because valuable input more often comes from these informal transactions as compared with overt training or resourcing.

34.1.3   In relation to the Church of England, Martin notes that comparatively little training and resources are available for clergy, and where these are available, they are limited and their coverage is patchy, particularly by regional or local programmes. He further states that important aspects such as preparation of individual congregations for participation in groups or Anglican multi-parish beneficiaries (MPBs), and equipping lay people for ministry and responsibility in teams or MPBs, are not included in current training courses or resources. In order to expand this practice and reduce the challenges – discussed below – Martin suggested that Rural Officers provide an additional resource and must be given extra support in performing their role as they were often crucial to success of such efforts. However, since Martin's earlier work, this has been superseded by improvements in Continuing Ministerial Development the work of regional training officers, and there are now three modules within Common Awards that relate to rural mission and ministry, with one the Church of England's recognised Theological Education Institutions (TEIs) providing a rural training pathway.

34.1.4   In relation to The Methodist Church, Methodist ministers become responsible for number of churches within a circuit, and lay people recognise that they share their ministers with other churches. Martin (2011: 62-63) reports that *'recent developments, related to numbers of ordained ministers and churches, sizes of circuits and "clustering" of churches, have brought to light aspects of training and preparation for MCM in Methodist circles that many Methodist respondents feel need urgent action'.*

34.1.5   In relation to United Reformed Church (URC), Martin suggests that because of changes in ministry policies and staffing situations are created where multi-church ministry is becoming more widespread. Martin (2011: 63) further suggests that *'there is a growing sense that this will have serious implications concerning resources and training for both ministers and lay people in rural churches.'*

34.1.6   Understanding these more recent developments in each of the Christian traditions is particularly important because since the time Martin was writing, the Arthur Rank Centre

workshops finished in 2012 and have been replaced by "Germinate Groups" which adopt a "learning community" approach designed to equip for mission and development in rural multi-church groups, both lay and ordained people together. As a consequence, there is, at the time of writing, currently no specific provision for clergy multi-church ministry training which, if it were in place, would likely need to focus around the management of complexity, the challenges of collaboration; and the enabling and training of lay people. Notwithstanding recent developments, Martin's 2011 publication still effectively summarises the challenges faced by all Christian denominations in the development of effective rural multi-church ministry:
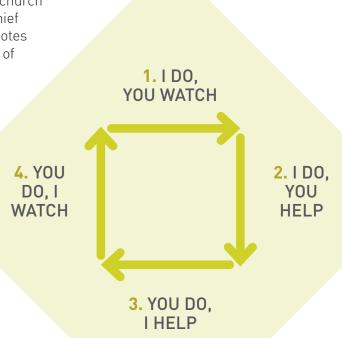
- There are adequate resources in general, though there are significant failures of signposting, publicity or accessibility.
- Most of the trainers lack the necessary background to relate training to varied rural contexts, or enable recipients to contextualise for themselves.
- Many clergy are dissatisfied at the absence of specific rural content during ministerial training, mostly the availability of practical rural elements, and in particular the possibility of significant rural placements. Short-term experience is patchy and mixed in content and depth.
- Lack of rural content during training leads some to seek it post-ordination. Yet access through denominations to relevant information or resources is very uneven, including apathy or even active opposition from the parent body or denomination.
- Even fewer suitable training opportunities or resources for rural lay people exist, so reinforcing a perception that the church does not value lay people.
- Regional training partnerships and similar bodies are not believed to be well-attuned to the rural constituency's needs, whether clergy or lay.
- Important differences in perceptions exist between clergy, training providers or strategic leaders and lay people themselves that prevent rural lay people from learning or participating in training. (Martin, 2011: 6-9)

35.1 Concluding Reflections

35.1.1 As noted above, in considering models which might be used in resourcing and training for the rural church in England there is very little that has been published specifically with reference to the contexts and challenges of rural multi-church ministry. But as Jerry Marshall (2014), then Chief Executive Officer of the Arthur Rank Centre, notes of Jesus' approach to leadership, his exercise of leadership was not of one dominant style, but rather was highly contextual. As Marshall articulates it: *"Jesus was the master of several styles, that he used as different stages to develop the disciples. He varied his style according the stage his disciples were at."* In visual terms, Marshall expresses this as:

35.1.2 Marshall explains the approach taken by Jesus in terms of the following developmental trajectory over time of his presence and work with his first disciples:

1. I DO, YOU WATCH

2. I DO, YOU HELP

3. YOU DO, I HELP

4. YOU DO, I WATCH

- Initially, he was Directive, saying 'come and follow me' to the disciples and performing miracles (I do you watch)
- Then, Coaching - involving them, for example in feeding the 5,000; and Mark 9:28-9 shows they were doing miracles (and sometimes failing) (I do, you help)
- Then, Consensus – he calls the disciples 'friends' (John 15:12-17) – and sends out 72 (Luke 10) (You do, I help)
- Then Delegation: the Great Commission (Mat 28:18-20) (You do, I watch).

35.1.3 So perhaps the challenge is not to identify a single model that can be rolled out to address the challenges posed by rural multi-church ministry. For the Church of England, such a highly contextual approach might stand in some contrast with what Martyn Percy (2016) criticises as the "risk" of the Church of England becoming a "suburban sect", which risk he identifies as a possible consequence of the Church's Renewal and Reform programme (see Church of England, 2016) that he and others critique for focusing on "church planting" among young families and students mainly in urban areas.

35.1.4 Rather, the ways forward which might be identified will need to be very much contextualised. As Marshall (n.d.) vividly put it in a presentation on "The Future of the International Rural Churches Association (IRCA)" Europe: *"The narrative of the rural church needs to be changed from a picture of decline: a small church works in a different way to a large church (just as 'a satsuma is not a failure as an orange' but a different fruit with its own characteristics, though clearly related to an orange)."*

35.1.5 Returning at the end of this literature review to the broader than specifically Christian-inflected literature on leadership, as argued for the wider world of leadership by Acona et al (2007: 110) in their *Harvard Business Review* article on "In Praise of The Incomplete Leader":

"It's time to end the myth of the complete leader; the flawless person at the top who's got it all figured out. In fact the sooner leaders stop trying to be all things to all people, the better off their organizations will be" and, *"Only when leaders come to see themselves as incomplete - as having both strengths and weaknesses - will they be able to make up for their missing skills by relating to others."*

35.1.6 If this is generally speaking true of leadership within organisations and groups then it is likely also to be contextually true in resourcing and developing rural multi-church ministry in contemporary England. And if approaching rural multi-church ministry from within a theologically and ecclesiogically-informed perspective that understands the Christian Church, its presence, ministry and witness in terms of the "Body of Christ", then what is argued by Ancona et al is likely to be a very important for the future of the rural Church. Indeed, if this can and should be applied to leadership development within individual Christian traditions and organisational forms, then it can and should also shape an imperative to try to meet the challenges of rural multi-church ministry leadership development on the basis of as ecumenically inclusive an approach as possible.

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APPENDIX 1

Training and Development Resources Identified by Interviewees as Useful for Lay Ministry Development

TITLE OF TRAINING	LOCATION	COMMENTS
Denomination: Church of England		
Licensed Lay Minister / Reader	Diocese	Formal training
Authorised Lay Minister	Diocese	Formal training
Growing Leaders	Deanery	CPAS
Bishops Certificate in Theology	Deanery or central point in diocese	Diocesan course
Pastoral training	Deanery	Diocesan course
Growing Young Leaders		CPAS
Exploring Christianity	Diocese / other	Ad hoc delivery, depending on location and aimed at lay people, the beginning of training for licenced lay ministry
Thrive Communities	Diocese / Deanery	CPAS
Leading your Church in Growth (LYCiG)	Diocese / delivered nationally but only specific to a few dioceses	Focus on numerical growth, spiritual growth and how churches support their communities
Recognised Parish / Lay Pastoral Assistants	Diocese	16 sessions focusing on bible studies, pastoral work, worship leading, Mission, children and youth
Uses ARC materials		ARC materials were regularly identified as used for lay development including • Rural Ministry Course • Germinate Leadership

TITLE OF TRAINING	LOCATION	COMMENTS
Denomination: Church of England		
Bishop's Certificate Course	Dioceses	
Alpha Course	Local	
Pilgrim	Local	
Mentoring with young people	Local	
The God Who is There course	Local	People get very engrossed and it takes them a long time to complete the programme. Often continue to meet as a group as get on well
Pastoral Assistant training	Local / diocese	Can focus on worship or pastoral care
Thrive Learning Communities		CPAS
Recognised Parish Assistant	Diocese	Teaches basic kinds of listening skills, interactive communication, pastoral care and biblical theological underpinning
Film course - exploring theological implications	Local	Local programmes focusing on the icon of the Trinity
Social Media		Modelling and telling good news stories using social media. Feel important to tell stories
Contemplative Spirituality Group	Local	Ecumenical group
Bible stories session	Local	Delivered in local parishioners' homes
History of the Old Testament	Local	Delivered in local parishioners' homes
Encouraging worship	Local	Training day focused on music, flowers, reading the lesson and welcoming
Developing spirituality	Local	Training day focusing on aspects of prayer and evangelism
Emmaus course	Local	
Lost for Words	Local	CPAS

TITLE OF TRAINING	LOCATION	COMMENTS
Denomination: Church of England		
Mission Shaped Ministry (MSM)	Diocese / Deanery / local	Has contributed to growing a new church http://www.missionshapedministry.org/
Acorn listening Programme	Diocese	Negative views on this course – would not recommend it. Felt it was a one size fits all
Denomination: Methodist		
Discussion and conversation	Local	Focuses on a one to one approach
Use of ARC materials	Local	Find these useful
Informal training	Local	
Mentoring	Local	
Safeguarding	District	
Treasurer training	District	
Mission Shaped Ministry (MSM)	District	http://www.missionshapedministry.org/
Start Course	District	http://www.disciplekit.org/resource/start-discovering-christianity-in-six-small-group-sessions/
Ecumenical Courses on specific themes		These includes issues such as dementia. The local group decides what they want to focus on. This course was only identified in one location
Denomination: United Reform Church		
Focus on Mission Work	Resources	Aims to equip the local church for its life together and its mission to its community and the wider world https://urc-eastern.org.uk/td-locall-church/focus-booklets
Focus on Pioneering God	Resources	Aims to equip the local church for its life together and its mission to its community and the wider world https://urc-eastern.org.uk/td-locall-church/focus-booklets
Pioneering People	Resources	Aims to equip the local church for its life together and its mission to its community and the wider world https://urc-eastern.org.uk/td-locall-church/focus-booklets

TITLE OF TRAINING	LOCATION	COMMENTS
Denomination: United Reform Church		
Mission Possible	Resources	Aims to equip the local church for its life together and its mission to its community and the wider world https://urc-eastern.org.uk/td-locall-church/focus-booklets
Creative Worship	Resources	Aims to equip the local church for its life together and its mission to its community and the wider world https://urc-eastern.org.uk/td-locall-church/focus-booklets
Thinking About	Resources	Aims to equip the local church for its life together and its mission to its community and the wider world https://urc-eastern.org.uk/td-locall-church/focus-booklets
Presence	Resources	Workbook for Rural churches
Walking the Way, Living the Life of Jesus Today	Resources	Resources focusing on discipleship and empowering local churches – this is currently being developed
Learning and Service training	Local	No longer available has been replaced by Walking the way https://urc.org.uk/our-work/walking-the-way.html
Walking the Way	Local	Course with integrated style of learning with a strong practical focus
From Welcome to Belonging	Resource	Booklet http://www.urc-eastern.org.uk/td-locall-church/focus-booklets/from-welcome-to-belonging
The Disciplineships role	Course – focused on local delivery	New training course being rolled out. Included information on 10 habits of discipleship. It is visual and includes online learning and blended learning. It has focus on local ownership by churches http://www.urc-eastern.org.uk/td-locall-church/focus-booklets
Training for Learning and Serving (TLS)	Local	https://urc.org.uk/tls-page.html
LITE (Local Introductory Training Experiences)	Local	Shortened version of TLS programme https://urc.org.uk/more-about-tls-lite.html
Mentoring and informal sharing	Local	Support on a one to one basis

APPENDIX 2:
Training Programmes / Resources

Name	Organisation/ denomination	Weblink	Details
Arrow Leadership Development	CPAS	http://www.cpas.org.uk/events-and-programmes/equipping-leaders/arrow-leadership-programme/programme-details/#.WA4r5CwzUal	Leadership development programme over 18 months – not specifically designed for rural or multi-church settings.
Fresh Expressions Rural Hub	Fresh Expressions	https://freshexpressions.org.uk/connect/rural-hub/	Fresh Expressions are new forms of church that emerge within contemporary culture and engage primarily with those who don't 'go to church. The Rural Hub has lots of useful information and resources on rural fresh expressions
Germinate Groups	Germinate: Arthur Rank Centre	http://germinate.net/training/germinate-groups/	Learning communities for rural multi-church groups to help facilitate change based on prayer and action
Germinate Leadership	Germinate: Arthur Rank Centre	http://germinate.net/training/germinate-leadership/	Germinate Leadership is an exciting programme on leadership in the rural church to help lay and ordained leaders from all denominations to develop creative, entrepreneurial skills for effective rural church leadership
Germinate Rural Ministry	Germinate: Arthur Rank Centre	http://germinate.net/	Training for those new to rural ministry or wanting to explore things more deeply. A modular course that allows you to dip in or put on a full training course. Coming soon!
Growing leaders for growing churches	CPAS	https://www.cpas.org.uk/church-resources/growing-leaders-suite/growing-leaders	Leadership development programme over 18 months - not specifically designed for rural or multi-church settings.
Mission-shaped ministry	A programme from Fresh Expressions.	http://www.missionshapedministry.org/	Mission shaped ministry is part of a multi-level training and development programme incorporating social media. See also: https://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/resources

Name	Organisation/ denomination	Weblink	Details
Pilgrim course	Church of England	http://www.pilgrimcourse.org/	There are two stages: 'Follow' which introduces the Christian faith and 'Grow' which seeks to develop deeper discipleship. For each Stage there are 4 short courses (each lasting 6 sessions) with booklets.
Rural Ministries	Charity aimed to support rural churches through missional listening and creative investment in mission and fresh expressions	https://www.ruralministries.org.uk/	Church planting, support for missional listening and resources to link with communities, conferences and events.
Start!	Leading your church into growth	http://www.disciplekit.org/resource/start-discovering-christianity-in-six-small-group-sessions/	Start! introduces Christianity through six DVD based interactive, small-group sessions. Start! costs £54.50 including postage and packaging. Leadership and Multi-church training is available from the organisers, but no specific mention of rural church leadership found.
Thrive Communities	CPAS	https://www.cpas.org.uk/advice-and-support/multiparish-leadership/#.XAWofeJBqUk	Learning communities for multi-church groups
Training for Learning and Serving (TLS)	United Reformed Church and available to all denominations.	https://urc.org.uk/tls-page.html	Comprises TLS and TLS Lite. Broadly based development training. Can lead to lay accreditation.