

FROM FRUSTRATION TO FULFILMENT:

The Final Ten Years of Licensed Ministry

A report to the House of Bishops from the Senior Clergy Group
under the chairmanship of the Clergy Appointments Adviser

October 2007

FOREWARD FROM THE BISHOP OF NORWICH

Two priests on the verge of retirement came to see me. Both of them had once been on the preferment list. Each concluded their stipendiary ministry in parishes. The first said how little he wanted to retire and that he enjoyed his ministry as much as when he was first ordained forty years previously. There was no doubt that his parishioners loved him and dreaded the day he would leave. He was also held in high regard by his clergy colleagues.

The second of the two had been counting the days and weeks to retirement for a long time. He felt unfulfilled and unrewarded. He had built a good congregation in his parish and had many talents but he had become so negative in recent years that his people were waiting for him to go.

Are these differences just a matter of personality, disposition and strength of vocation? How does the Church ensure that the final years of stipendiary ministry remain fulfilling and rewarding for its clergy and in consequence for lay people as well?

This report examines a sensitive and difficult issue but one that has major implications for the mission and witness of the Church. I am very grateful to John Lee and his colleagues for responding so readily to my initial musings and for making so many practical suggestions. I hope that my fellow bishops and others will read and reflect on this report.

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OLDER PARISH PRIEST

Charles is in a 'Catch 22' position. He was ordained over thirty years ago and has a history of devoted service to three livings since he served his title. The present setting is the longest and has been the one where his children grew up. He and his wife just don't know what to do. They have made many friends in the parish and he is starting to marry some of the children he baptised over twenty years ago. Charles has, by no means trodden water. Five years ago he completed an M.Th and he used a sabbatical break to look at the Church's attitude towards suicide, having had two very upsetting incidents in families he knew well. The Church Times ran an article about the paper he wrote as a result. He has served as Rural Dean and he has trained a succession of curates who all (bar one) speak very highly and lovingly of him.

Charles is sixty and he has another job inside him, but not the energy he had as a forty-year-old! He knows he should have been to see the Clergy Appointments Adviser several years ago but it is now too late (he thinks); and anyway, what could be attractive about an old man who can only offer experience and a reasonable theological brain. He loves youngsters and still conducts a lively and enjoyable All-Age Service, he has the trust and the affection of the local school (staff, parents and children) but he is losing his grey hair and he looks his age. He could quite easily just stay put, the freehold is his, and no-one wants him to move but his conscience is getting to him. And, if he is really honest, he is angry that the Church seems quite content to leave him alone. He has so much to offer in the way of coaching, direction and mentoring but there is nothing of this nature being considered by those in authority. All they have done is say that Charles' parish cannot continue to have a curate because of the reduction in numbers. The bishop wrote, "This is no reflection on the wonderful training you have given to so many in the past, just an adjustment to different needs." Charles thought otherwise!

I INTRODUCTION

The Bishop of Norwich wrote to the Clergy Appointments Adviser in early 2003 to express some concerns in the area of senior clergy who were not being fully used by the Church and what the Church should be learning from them.

By 'senior clergy', the Bishop was referring to those in their last ten years of ministry either who recognise that they are now unlikely to move to another post, or for whom moving is fraught with anxiety and even danger, for the person and for the institution. He suggested that a small group be convened to meet over a number of occasions with a view to submitting its findings to the House of Bishops for further consideration. Six priests of different ages, backgrounds and traditions duly accepted invitations to join what has become known as the Senior Clergy Group (SCG).

In his initial briefing the Bishop wrote the following:

“While we spend a great deal of time thinking about those who will be appointed to senior posts, we spend very little time thinking about the considerable number of clergy who are experienced, able, committed and effective but gradually come to realise (perhaps around the age of 55 or so) that they have ten years or more in ministry left but are unlikely to move on from their present post. They may already have occupied that post for a decade or more. They come to realise that they are unlikely to become a bishop, archdeacon or member of a cathedral staff and as the age of 60 approaches, they then recognise that parish representatives will think them too old for a move to another parish. Only a few years may pass between a good priest being on the preferment list and considered for higher office to that same good priest being considered unappointable to another post at parochial level. Some clergy seem to have an enormous reservoir of Christian grace and fortitude and cope with all this as if it is no problem at all. Others may find their reservoir of fortitude and forbearance begins to run dry. This isn't because of any lack of faith or loss of vocation but it may come as a result of expectations being raised which are unfulfilled. The church seems to be in the business of raising expectations much more than it was a generation or two ago, and the consequence of this may prove very negative. It does mean that there is a group of clergy (mostly male at the moment, though the number of women will increase) who become not simply disappointed but depressed and even embittered. It can lead to a very sad few final years of ministry for some clergy, and in some cases it means the undoing of very good work. That's why this is a mission issue.”

The issue is certainly serious for individual clergy who find themselves in this situation, but in the course of its work the SCG has discovered that it may be more statistically and strategically significant than had hitherto been assumed.¹ It therefore requires strategic solutions.

¹ Annex A brings together the most recent available figures on the age profile of serving clergy in the Church of England, drawing on separately compiled statistics from the Pensions Board and from the Ministry Division.

DOUBLE BLESSING?

Diana was a Reader (with a degree in Theology) in her local parish and she fell in love with the curate! She had always felt a calling from God to the priesthood but this had to be put 'on hold' when she married and had two children in quick succession.

However, the calling had not diminished with time and a selection conference confirmed her vocation. She was able to organise her domestic situation and complete an inter-diocesan training course while her husband worked as the incumbent of a parish. There were several murmurs about her duties as a mother in the parish but her children were growing up and her husband took a job as a hospital chaplain so she could pursue her desire to become an incumbent, transferring successfully to stipendiary ministry, and becoming the incumbent in her own right.

It became very clear that Diana was a gifted priest, more so than her husband. He continued in sector ministry and they lived in Diana's rectory. She was asked to do more and more in the diocese as well as running the parish and it became clear that her undoubted gifts were leading her towards further 'preferment.' There was even talk of a residential canonry attached to ministerial training as a serious option. Diana had to curtail her 'ambition' for the sake of her relationship with her husband and she decided (with the help of a friend and her spiritual director) to stay in parochial ministry and do what she could to assist the Director of Ministry. But a lot of people knew that she was capable of working on a much larger canvass. Nearing the age of fifty Diana saw a somewhat resentful ministry looming ahead of her for the next fifteen years!

There are approximately 9,106 diocesan clergy currently serving in the Church of England. Chaplaincies and other sector ministries number 1,238. Only a small number of priests will be appointed to one of the 373 'dignitary' or senior posts (Bishop, Cathedral Dean, Archdeacon, Residentiary Canon). Even if appointment to senior office in itself represents success – perhaps a dubious assumption – nevertheless, given these statistics, not being appointed can hardly be viewed as failure.

The statistics also show that 39% of stipendiary parochial clergy are aged 56 years or over. 36% of parish incumbents are aged 55 years or over. A recent study leave project has further suggested that the over-50s account for half of the church's incumbents.² Whatever else these statistics mean, they suggest that more preferment is clearly not the answer.

It is this dual context - of reducing clergy numbers and a higher-than-expected proportion of clergy being aged 55 or over - which has therefore focussed thinking around this report title: 'From Frustration to Fulfilment.'

² 'Will You Still Need Me....?', Revd Brian Duckett, study leave project summer 2004.

LATE ENTRANT

Stewart is fifty-two years old and worked as a senior Civil Servant in a government department for twenty-five years. In his last position, he managed a department of over two hundred people. He has two good degrees, one in Theology, and he trained for the ministry while still in secular employment. After an enjoyable curacy with an unthreatened incumbent, Stewart has moved into a Cathedral environment that combines his organisational skills with a gift in music but it is a fairly junior position as far as the 'pecking order' is concerned. Again he enjoys the job and is well regarded by colleagues. He has developed a taste for the larger stage and, along way, seems to be developing as a strong preacher!

Stewart is now being advised to go for an incumbency but nothing seems to attract him. Not only are they fairly small concerns with a lot of attention needed, the parishes have little to offer in the way of stretching someone who already has a proven ability in liturgy, music, preaching and administration. Stewart is getting some asides from patrons and senior staff that suggest he is setting his sights too high. However, Stewart knows that, although he could do a very good job in one of these settings, he would certainly need to give them at least five or six years and then he has probably lost any chance of the bigger setting and the greater responsibility. The prospects for internal happiness and well-being are not good!

2 DEFINITION AND FOCUS

The key questions which this report will therefore address are:

- how to recognise the frustration felt by many clergy in the last ten years of their stipendiary ministry, including a number of Bishops and Archdeacons, who can feel under-stimulated because their talents are not being fully used or recognised, nor are likely to be used or recognised before they retire; and to recognise that this has the potential to suppress leadership and mission in the church;
- how to affirm and re-focus as necessary all those in this age group (whether or not they expect preferment) who have gifts to offer the Church, and discovering means of utilising those abilities;
- how the Church may use and learn from those clergy, acknowledging that this is not just an issue for the Church but for wider society as well;³
- how fulfilment can be found in the later years of ministry.

It is important at this early stage to comment briefly on the sort of fulfilment that Christians may legitimately hope for. Certainly the search for power or status contradicts the teaching of Jesus about not lording it over others and his own sacrificial death. On the other hand he advises his disciples to use their talents creatively and to build one another up in Christian fellowship. Talents need to be developed and employed to the best possible advantage. If recognition and reward can support this process so much the better; for example if appointments or honours are awarded on the basis of merit, the faithful and effective servant may receive recognition and reward, though these cannot be assured. His or her responsibility is to pursue a vocation none the less.

Legitimate Christian ambition is well expressed by words quoted by Michael Ramsey, then Bishop of Durham in 1956 when addressing a group of ordinands. They come from a famous predecessor, Bishop Lightfoot, who said:

*"I am ambitious for you all. But my ambition does not take the form of wishing to see you in places of emolument or of ease or of comfort or of popularity. I desire above all things that you should be fit to do Christ's work, that you should be ready to do it, and that you should have the scope and opportunity to do it. I covet for you not the honour of men, but the honour of God."*⁴

³ In any sort of social analysis, it is fairly clear that the Church of England is no more deficient than other employers in looking after its older employees. Its problems may be compounded on account of being an older institution. Nevertheless, the situation in the Church is mirrored in the so-called 'secular workplace' where reducing numbers and an ageing working population are creating similar problems – "It's Time to Retire", Harvard Business Review, March 2004, pp 49-57.

⁴ *Durham Essays and Addresses*, Michael Ramsey, SPCK (1957), p137.

SUFFRAGAN BISHOP

John is sixty-one years old. He was one of the younger consecrations in a batch that showed enormous promise and, for the first five years he worked hard and enjoyed a good relationship with his diocesan. Prior to his ordination as a bishop he had been a very 'successful' parish priest.

Having taken the diocese through an interregnum, John hoped for some sort of recognition that he could make the step up himself. The relationship with the new diocesan was never as good as before and there was the feeling that John was acting as his 'assistant' rather than as a colleague. Staff meetings were firmly controlled and the bonhomie between members was just a cover for some deeper ills. In fact, John feels that the diocese is not flourishing under its present leadership, although the diocesan has a high profile nationally, and he could do a better job.

There is no area system in the diocese so John has always had responsibility for the 'younger' clergy and the sector ministries as well as the endless round of institutions and confirmations but he is losing heart and, if he really told the truth, some of his faith as well. John has always had an interest in mission in a rural environment and he heads up a national body and writes and lectures on the subject, but it doesn't carry a lot of weight. There are the trappings of power and influence but John feels continually frustrated over policy and direction for the diocese; he is finding that the 'rural' specialism is meaning more to him than his profile as a bishop in the diocese. He also knows that it is very unlikely that he will now be chosen as a diocesan bishop. What does John do for the next five years?

3 SOME CONTEMPORARY EVIDENCE

A number of relevant issues have already been tackled in recent publications. For example, Andrew Clitherow has observed:

*"For better or for worse - whichever way you look at it - times are changing and ministry today is quite different from what it was twenty-five years ago.....In general terms it appears that most parishes prefer to have the incumbent as the senior manager of the set-up while at the same time retaining all the traditional expectations of the role."*⁵

Although *Affirmation and Accountability* does not refer to senior clergy in the way that the words are used here, it contains at least six references to their situation and to possible solutions, some of which have now been adopted here as specific recommendations.⁶ The foreword to *Mission-Shaped Church*, read with [this](#) report's target issues in mind, also offers a useful perspective:

*"The challenge is not to force everything into the familiar mould; but neither is it to tear up the rule book and start from scratch.... What makes the situation interesting is that we are going to have to live with variety so that everyone grows together in faith and in eagerness to learn about and spread the Good News".*⁷

Some call for changes which could heighten the frustration of senior clergy. Bob Jackson cites research evidence that younger clergy are more likely to be associated with growing churches than older clergy⁸ and therefore suggests that more young people and fewer senior clergy should be promoted to leadership positions.⁹ However the book anticipates *Mission-Shaped Church* by encouraging more flexible decision-making at parish, deanery and diocesan level which could be facilitated by skilled and experienced clergy.¹⁰

In his latest book, *The Road To Growth*, Jackson directly addresses several of the concerns of this report: the flat career structure that leaves some senior clergy frustrated; low morale resulting from social changes, including a decline in churchgoing, for which individual clergy cannot be blamed; the need for CME to fit clergy for the changing role of overseeing several congregations rather than pastoring a single one. He recommends the possibility of increments for increased responsibility and of honoraria for retired clergy still working. Distinctively he wants greater attention in CME to be given to change management and training for church growth.¹¹

⁵ *Renewing Faith In Ordained Ministry*, SPCK 2004, pp 10-11

⁶ *Affirmation and Accountability*, The Society of Martha and Mary, 2002, pp 13, 43, 44, 75 and 107

⁷ *Mission Shaped Church*, Church House Publishing 2004, p vii.

⁸ *Hope For The Church*, Church House Publishing 2002, p159

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 155 and 178

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 71-76 and 158ff.

¹¹ *The Road To Growth*, Church House Publishing 2005, pp132-139

ANGRY 'OLD' MAN

Richard went up to Cambridge at eighteen on an Exhibition to read Pure Maths. He had never had to work that hard and he knows he should have got a first, but he made do with a good second. After several years of teaching in a minor public school he offered himself for ordination and was accepted easily (so he thought). Three years at theological college and another 'second' in theology made him realise that there was a career to be pursued here and he set about climbing the greasy pole. Friendships with senior churchmen and some skill in preaching and liturgy seemed to indicate a steady rise towards a residential canonry and then episcopacy.

There was always a slight edge to Richard's humour and no one got very close to him because, in spite of the cleverness of the wit, there was no guarantee that you would not be directly in the firing line! His friends would talk about it behind his back but, because they recognised it came from great insecurity, nobody challenged him or pointed out what he was doing. The trouble was that 'the institution' did recognise it as a problem and preferment did not come. Old college friends and newer colleagues all seemed to be getting senior posts but Richard was ignored (so he thought). He became more openly bitter and angry and spent less time attending to his parochial duties. The campaigning activities of a clergy association took more and more time and he achieved some notoriety in print and on various platforms but, inside, he was angry and bitter with a Church that had let him down. Richard was lonely, unfulfilled and had started drinking before lunch as well as later in the evening to get through each day.

Attention might also be paid to good contemporary employment practices and in particular to patterns of appointment in other churches. For example the Methodist Church directly attempts to relate the needs of its ministers to the needs of the Church and, therefore, ministerial development to ministerial deployment in a considered and structured way.

These are not abstract issues, but resonate with real life situations from the experience of group members and others. Many diocesan staff are aware of them but find them difficult to tackle, as highlighted in the recent discussions of several Houses of Clergy. CME officers, in correspondence with the group, have confirmed that, although a number of factors influence the motivation and performance of senior clergy, the frustration felt by senior clergy is nevertheless a discrete area which is not being directly examined within other related initiatives.

This omission may be on account of these questions arising in a number of different clergy contexts, as is illustrated by the case studies which are interspersed within this Report.¹² The case studies show through the lives of real people that there are a number of areas which highlight recurring themes to be faced by all clergy and by all who care for them. These themes, perhaps better expressed in terms of personal attributes which individual clergy possess to a greater or sometimes lesser extent.

They are:

- self-awareness and knowledge
- imagination (seeing the wider Church's point of view)
- discernment (as opposed to ambition)
- taking responsibility
- experiencing grace (through honest and realistic encouragement)

Section 5 of this report reflects these personal, emotional and – ultimately – vocational issues in greater depth. It balances them with an analysis of some of the darker material which is found in everyone and which inevitably contributes to the predicament that some clergy, including senior clergy, find themselves in.

Nevertheless, in speaking of predicament, there is a danger that frustration is overstated at the expense of fulfilment (or, at least, contentment). Discharging the onerous responsibilities set out in the Ordinal, however impossible, can be rewarding in itself. The extent to which a priest understands and is comfortable in the role is different for different people. One will envisage their role as that of a Shepherd, another as a Servant, another as a Teacher, and so on. The group writing this report has therefore been keen to ensure that the Church is not overly concerned with a problem but instead takes the opportunity to reflect creatively, and without emphasising preferment, on ordained ministry in later years.

¹² The case studies are drawn from real encounters between the Clergy Appointments Adviser and clergy at different stages of ministry. The names of the people in question have of course been changed and many of the situations described adjusted in order to preserve the anonymity of those concerned.

BISHOP'S CHAPLAIN

Brian is single and nearing sixty. He has been a parish priest and enjoyed it in large part but his best job he feels was when he served as diocesan bishop's chaplain for seven years. He obtained two good degrees in theology and always hoped to be able to 'put them into practice.' This hope became a reality when he was called out of parochial ministry to work for a bishop he admired enormously. Life was fascinating, dangerous (at times) and extremely busy, but it was great fun! The diocese was used to some pretty weighty articles, lectures and sermons from their 'father-in-God' and Brian had sometimes supplied his boss with a framework and a direction when he was too busy to do his own research. The bishop had hoped that Brian might eventually become a suffragan bishop himself (he was competent enough) and he had said as much to several people, including Brian. Clearly, this was now not going to happen and Brian cannot face the idea of a less-than-attractive living that is unlikely to allow him the sort of theologically articulate audience he craves. A move to a small living will also be seen as failure by friends and colleagues and (on good days) it is clearly less of a job than Brian can do. Depression and loneliness have always been closer companions than Brian cares to admit and they were kept well at bay while he was at Bishop's Lodge. He is frightened of the future.

4 STRUCTURE AND ETHOS

It is therefore recognised that the structure and ethos of the Church both contributes to the questions this report is addressing whilst also containing some of the answers.

We all function better with critical affirmation. We feel our contribution is recognised and valued, and we are not mere cogs in the wheel. It is only when a cog falls out of place that, sometimes, the system recognises it. It is important to distinguish between different categories of clergy. On the one hand, there are those who are a cause for concern and who take up a large amount of time at Senior Staff meetings. They contrast with the greater number who still have a lively and interesting approach to the work whose ministries would benefit further through being affirmed and harnessed.

Consequently we need to consider to what extent the Church helps clergy to feel and know that they are valued, irrespective of whether they have become part of the hierarchy. How can the Church develop a culture which cherishes its ordained human resource? How can we ensure that review and appraisal systems lead to action, development and growth – not just of the clergy but of the parishes/sector ministries?

Many clergy feel alienated by the review process and/or by the appointments system(s), which leads to a radicalisation and marginalisation of otherwise talented people. Demotivation may be particularly acute for able candidates who see younger candidates chosen ahead of them in open competitive procedures. Beyond this, there are several 'glass ceilings' in place which affect different groups of clergy, and not just for senior appointments. These particularly affect women clergy, and those from a minority ethnic background. The existence of separate and sometimes conflicting systems of patronage can result in the power of appointment being the power of veto.

However questions of structure and ethos are not confined to the clergy 'rank and file'. When frustration surfaces Bishops and Archdeacons are frequently the last with whom information is shared, despite the implications of the shared Cure. This may be because they are considered to have 'cracked' the system, or perhaps because their position in the hierarchy has left them without a relational community within the Diocese. Furthermore the different traditions within the Church of England result in competing views of the Church, in respect of ordination, ecclesiology and authority. This can make care for the senior clergy more difficult. Finally, the perceived isolation of some senior staff may just be as a result of poor communication - in both directions.

The expectations and legal responsibilities of the priest in episcopal, parochial and sector ministry are frequently impossibly high, and made worse by their own sense of duty and an inclination towards over-work. Others seemingly not taking account of sacrificial service further reduces professional self-esteem and morale. A lack of recognition by the Church merely serves to reinforce the sense of irrelevance and worthlessness, although – of course - the same is true in organisations outside the Church. It is also possible that the question of frustrated senior clergy may have become more acute in a climate where, typically, ordination now follows later in life.

LATE-DEVELOPER !

Andrew had always been told he was hopeless at school and he left, to start an apprenticeship in car mechanics, as soon as he was sixteen. An encounter with his local church and the care and concern of the curate resulted in a commitment to Christ at the age of twenty-one. Then a slow but steady journey into more-and-more responsibility finally brought many friends to the conclusion that Andy should be ordained. He was not so keen and by now was a thirty-year-old married man with two young children. Books and studying were not easy but he seemed to have a flair for communication and gentle evangelism. His first incumbent saw these gifts almost immediately and gave Andy as much room as he needed. Sole charge followed and congregations grew. Andy read more and more about other models of outreach and was persuaded to convert his diploma into a degree and then, while still the incumbent of a fairly demanding living, took on an M.A. in Mission. He got a distinction!

An even larger parish followed and through his early fifties he was made Rural Dean and sat on several diocesan committees as well as Bishop's Council. Andy had arrived in the home he always thought was outside his reach and many people told him he was capable of even higher responsibility, but.....as he watched his calling blossom and grow he also knew that it was totally described by the institution he has devoted his life and (previously) hidden talents to. In other words, if there is stiff competition for each "Missioner" job he sees and the applicants for Archdeacon posts are in the hundreds...where does he go from here?

In particular, ordination follows on from a first career, which may or may not have been successful, within a different organisational culture.

Part of the solution to this is to implement practical changes to the structure which will gradually lead to a change of ethos. Section 5 of this report will make such recommendations. However, the second part of the equation rests with the clergy themselves: in particular, how will the disappointed respond? This will have its roots in vocation.

SERVICE CHAPLAIN

Paul was an Army Chaplain for twenty-seven years. Two appointments to training camps were not the highlight of his service career. The endless round of classes and administration drove him into a mild depression, but the tours of duty in Belize, Northern Ireland, Bosnia and The Gulf were exactly what he felt God called him to do. He earned the respect of 'squaddies' and his superior officers in equal measure. The reports on his ministry were always of the highest order and his final reference from The Chaplain General was glowing.

His 'return' to parochial duties was very painful and, before he obtained his present incumbency, he had to endure the comments of parish representatives who told him he was not experienced enough in parochial work and one lady said that she did not consider work with an organisation that was "committed to violence" was the proper work of a priest! He feels that he has had to 'make do' with his present appointment because they were the only ones prepared to give him a job.

Paul is a priest with a great sense of duty. He is scrupulous over the Occasional Offices and always visits before and after the funerals he conducts. He is not a gifted preacher but he is short and to the point. His pastoral skills more than make up for any lack in pulpit charisma and he conducts P.C.C. business efficiently and effectively. He is welcome in all three village pubs and has gained respect from many who only use the church occasionally, if at all.

The Diocese seems to take little interest in him and all his experience is of little value in a Church that has moved on from the model of ministry he grew up with and tries to emulate. Paul is treading water until the age of sixty-five and, although he feels fulfilled in the particulars of parochial ministry, he has a wealth of stories and reflections that could provide interesting topics for CME days and vocational events. He sees the end of his stipendiary days as rather bleak and he has the occasional reminder of the depression he felt when pushing paper in the Army. The only consolation is a good pension and a house he had managed to purchase by the sea!

5 PERSONAL, EMOTIONAL AND VOCATIONAL FACTORS

5.1 'Seeds and Compost': a personal view from the Clergy Appointments Adviser

There are many factors, both in the changing institution of the Church and in the minds of ordained clergy, that contribute to an unsettled and unsettling last ten years of ministry. Stipendiary ministry in, and for, the Church is also a mirror of society with its changing needs and expectations.

The Parable of the Sower is a rich metaphor with which to consider a vocation to stipendiary ministry without the simplistic interpretation often given. As Jesus tells the story, the different states of growth and yield are from the same seed source but the outcome is determined by the conditions in which germination and growth are encouraged. The Church presumes to discern vocations that have vastly different theological and ecclesiological emphases and practice but the binding recognition is "this is of God!" An interesting exercise at some stage may be to try and compare the criteria operating in a bishop's study or a selection conference thirty-five years ago and the process of discernment and assessment today. It is not good enough to state that little has changed.

The *age of candidates* alone will bring all sorts of expectations of the institution, even if it stayed still, whereby a younger person can still look to the Church to protect and care, whereas the older candidate has already sorted out accommodation and an adequate pension/financial package that makes risk in ministry less of a problem.¹³

No matter what arguments are brought to bear on the 'establishment' status of The Church of England, the fact that the general public are in large part indifferent to its work means that there is a *loss of status* in wearing a clerical collar. The routine work of a parish priest somehow feels more routine than ever and less valued than ever. Accepted roles as badly paid but respected community leaders no longer follow automatically. In fact, the desire of clergy to help a community may now be greeted with hostility in some quarters (such as state schools and colleges of higher education).

The vocation has moved subtly towards a more optional position where 'high' catholic or 'low' evangelical witness is a fringe activity that has meaning for the initiated, but mainstream Anglican loyalties are only revived during rites of passage or at Christmas or Easter. This change is deeply disturbing to some older clergy who felt that their vocation was to a *public office* as well as a personal calling and this would always have the understanding, if not the direct support, of local people and organisations.

¹³ Additionally, the changing age profile of the clergy is likely to have had an impact upon falling *stipendiary* numbers referred to earlier in this report.

BLACK PRIEST

Lydia was born and brought up in Uganda but, when she finished her secondary education, her aunt (who was living in Birmingham) encouraged her to come over to England to pursue a tertiary education here. She enrolled at a British university and did very well, obtaining an upper second honours degree in Theology and going on to take a Master's course before returning to Uganda because her mother was ill and she felt a duty to look after the rest of the family. Her mother died soon after she returned and she helped bring up the rest of her siblings until they were old enough to go out to work or on to further education themselves. She was then in her late thirties.

Lydia came back to England, rejoined her aunt, and the local church confirmed her vocation to the ministry. She was sponsored by a diocese here, she completed a non-residential course while working as a nursing auxiliary and she served her title in an inner-city parish. Her training incumbent said she was the best curate he had ever trained and learnt much from her preaching and teaching. The parish was very upset when it came time to move on and find her own 'living' and this is where her problems began.

An appearance on the Clergy Appointments Adviser's list, conversations with several patronage trusts and her own efforts resulted in absolutely nothing! She had five interviews and the panels were very kind to her but all to no avail. Lydia suspected that people were not prepared to accept a single black woman with a pronounced 'African' accent and she went back to the Adviser to ask for some help. He thought her conclusions were mostly correct but the other element he focused on was her quiet and prayerful demeanour. This just did not fit the sorts of parishes she was applying for. They all had produced rather extravagant 'wish-lists' that would have tested a saint and he helped her to look a bit more closely at the sort of person and job profiles that had greater depth, as well as the obvious factor of suburban and rural prejudices. This was quite an upsetting process for Lydia and the Adviser because it was very clear they were both powerless.

It took Lydia two more years to find a new post and she was worried about what she would meet when this one finished and she was much older. The Church clearly seemed to have little to learn from Lydia with all her wide experience and her good theological brain.

The response of the Church is to increase its frenetic internal activity to avoid an unpalatable truth i.e. a lack of national clout! This results in anxiety and low morale amongst older clergy in particular who feel they have to remain busy and needed. The desire for recognition is focussed more keenly on the faithful, of whom senior staff are the most obvious representatives, and the depressing circle is completed.

A calling to ministry was not only recognised by the Church, no matter what internal selection criteria were employed, but it was also recognised by friends, family, communities and organisations. Although a selection process was gone through and a bishop advised of the outcome, the 'contract' was also made *with society*. Baptisms, marriages and funerals were the main expression of this understanding in every parish thirty or more years ago. There is now a serious erosion of this understanding and the choices of our present age at times of passage do not have to include the parson in the same way.

However there are other factors which have a direct bearing on the satisfaction, or otherwise, of clergy in their later years, which have all been 'seen' in the Clergy Appointments Adviser's Office:

INDIVIDUAL	INSTITUTION	SOCIETY
Passive/active	Friend/enemy	Open/closed
<i>Dependent Child</i>	<i>Protecting/Watchful Parent</i>	<i>Rewarding</i>
<i>Assured Individualist</i>	<i>Private Members' Club</i>	<i>Disinterested</i>
<i>Attention Seeker</i>	<i>Awarding Body</i>	<i>Antagonistic</i>
<i>Pilgrim</i>	<i>Ginger Group</i>	<i>Fragmented</i>
<i>Pupil</i>	<i>Misguided Company</i>	<i>Corrupt</i>
<i>Arrogant Teenager</i>	<i>Temporary Home</i>	<i>Necessary Corrective</i>
<i>Orphan</i>	<i>Security Blanket</i>	<i>Exciting Medium</i>
<i>Explorer</i>	<i>Historical Society</i>	<i>Dangerous Territory</i>
<i>Enthusiast</i>	<i>Permanent Home</i>	<i>Strange Land</i>
<i>Reliable Friend</i>	<i>An Irrelevance</i>	

All of these descriptions, plus many more, are present in differing quantities in combination with each other. They can be read across, down or diagonally but the emotional response within the time frame of a 'life' of stipendiary ministry will produce all sorts of different reactions that are fairly unpredictable. As each combination of options changes, in addition to other variables such as dependants, single status, gender, ethnic background, and sexuality, there is the inevitable consequence of satisfaction or dissatisfaction

FAILED BISHOP

Arthur has been ordained for twenty-two years, with most of his experience being in fairly demanding inner city posts. He has never shirked a 'challenge' and was happy to take on parishes that other colleagues balked at. His wife has always been very supportive of Arthur's ministry, even though she has had some reservations about the cost of some of their decisions to the children. They are particularly worried about their eldest son who has gone 'off the rails' and mixes with some pretty unsavoury elements in the present parish. Arthur has a good degree in Theology and has also managed to do an MBA while building a very interesting team around him. He has an excellent reputation as a far-sighted thinker and enabler and he is much respected by his colleagues who do not share his particular brand of 'churchmanship'.

Arthur was very settled in the living but three months ago he was called for interview, along with three others, for a suffragan bishop's post in another diocese. He did not interview well and was called on the phone by the 'diocesan' a few days later to be told the news he expected, namely that someone else had matched the profile exactly and

Arthur was clearly uneasy with the role. He accepted the 'feedback' and agreed wholeheartedly with it. However, what Arthur did not expect was the unsettled feelings that crept up on him. The following weeks were fine as he got on with the tasks in the parish but slowly he became irritated and dissatisfied. The interfaith work that had been so central was boring, the retraining programmes for unemployed people on the estates did not interest him any more and even his spiritual life (that had always been so important) did not provide the refreshment he needed. Arthur went to see his Spiritual Director who himself had always (secretly) wanted to be a bishop and the encounter was not that successful. He was alone, unhappy and disturbed by a process that was designed to seek good priests for senior roles but merely had the effect of unsettling a good practitioner who had never entertained the idea until that fateful day!

Arthur has another fifteen years of ministry in front of him before he retires!

Appropriate boundaries are the clue to many problems in Anglican ministry and are seen in the parameters of **person and role**. For example, in almost every ordained person there is a different understanding of the following areas.

- **Single Status:** is parish life separate from one's private life or do they get merged?
- **Spouse/family:** are they called as well or are they entirely separate individuals who happen to be married to someone who is ordained? ¹⁴
- **Stipend:** is this a salary paid to the minister for full-time work in, and for, the Church or is it sufficient remuneration to release him/her for service?
- **House:** is this a private home or is it also a parish resource?
- **Parishioners:** are they friends and supporters or are they clients or consumers of the Christian service provided?
- **Time:** is this in the control of the ordained person or is it also 'possessed' by others?
- **Other interests/studies:** do these complement ministry or are they a distraction from the main task?
- **Spiritual/psychological and physical health:** "is this my responsibility or do I expect help from the institution?"
- **Senior staff:** are they there to assist or to criticise?

All these (and more) will affect the long-term morale and sense of worth that clergy have when many years of ministry have been completed **but each section is loaded differently and assumptions cannot be made as to proportional value in the mind of the individual priest**. The Church also has different interpretations regarding the boundary issues in all these areas.

There is also darker material in the mind of the priest that is less likely to be acknowledged or admitted, for example: power; control; envy and jealousy; grandiosity; narcissism; deliberate isolation; a love of the theatrical; a desire for fame.

¹⁴ These questions are still more acute when, as is increasingly common, the prospective ordinand is married to a person who is already ordained themselves.

WOMAN PRIEST

Jean had worked as a scientific officer for some time before her 'calling.' This provided her with enough capital for a three-year course at a theological college and she gained a good 2:1 in Theology. Then she worked as a stipendiary deaconess in the eighties for two very different incumbents who separately came to the conclusion that Jean was called to the priesthood. Jean was not so sure that God was saying this to her. However, the diocesan bishop added his weight to the argument and she was in the first cohort of women deacons to be priested in 1994. Two years later Jean was appointed to her own living and she has been there ever since.

However, Jean has a reputation as a very gifted spiritual director and sees clergy from several other dioceses, as well as her own. She is now the Rural Dean and she serves on Bishop's Council. The bishop has indicated that he would like her to accept the role of Adviser in Women's Ministry and join his senior staff team whilst still serving as an incumbent, but she needs to move on from her parish (she is now in her ninth year and, in her opinion, they need a younger person with new ideas). Dare she leave this diocese that has treated her so well to explore a new setting, because it is unlikely that a suitable job will come up locally? She is the wrong side of fifty-five, she has to admit that she gets tired more easily these days, and she would love a role that allowed her to think and pray more. If she is really honest, she needs the companionship of friends more as well and she would love more time to enjoy their company. No matter which way she turns, Jean will have to face some sort of bereavement!

When present, and usually unacknowledged, any of these 'attributes' can amplify an already frustrating situation into a real problem for those who have to deal with the motivation and deployment of clergy in the last ten years of ministry. The lighter side has often been encouraged in earlier years as gifts. For example, power and control have been seen as leadership potential; grandiosity and love of the theatrical as charisma; isolation and the desire for fame as the willingness to be counted as a leader who will not bend to popular opinion or the crowd.

As the Clergy Appointments Adviser for the last seven years I am always on alert when I get a personal or diocesan referral of a priest who is in their last ten years of ministry. I never know what state of mind the candidates will be in when they walk through the door. Some are content with their ministry and are merely looking for a meaningful final appointment where they can bring together some of the lessons they have learnt to a new situation. Others are angry and frustrated with an institution that has never appreciated their gifts and talents. Some are depressed and resigned to a changing world where the only option is to do more of the same with, hopefully, as different a situation that will give them enough mileage to reach retirement.

One small group have clearly lost their sense of vocation and, maybe, their faith in God and are hoping that the language they use and the experience they have will tide them over another post. However, looked at from the outside, they are a drain on the scarce resources of the Church and will probably make a poor showing in another setting. This group clearly should have been directed towards retraining and an examination of their transferable skills so that they can leave the ministry with as much dignity as possible.

The most interesting people are those who still have an enthusiasm for, and a commitment to, their present post and the crucial question is, "Should I move and risk a less satisfying setting or should I dig in and see out my working life in the same parish(es)? In which case, how do I focus my prayer life, the projects I have initiated, the long-term relationships I have made, and the extra-mural activity I may have taken on board to make these last years meaningful?"

These clergy will often preface such a conversation with a genuine desire to want the very best for their congregations and parishes and ask me the question, "If I move or stay, will it harm the future ministry in this place." I usually have to hold up my hands and say that I have no idea because I have no direct knowledge of their present setting. All I can deal with is the person in front of me and activate what analytic skills they have to examine various scenarios in terms of their 'professional' lives and the more personal areas of motivation and family/friendship networks that will contribute to, or threaten, any change in location.

Another conversation can also include the sorts of non-parochial responsibilities that many see in DDO/CME/Mission Adviser/Ministry Officers once they realise that a senior appointment is now out of the question. These sorts of posts whet the appetites of some clergy who really do have gifts of supervision and collegial support

PRIEST WITH TALENTS!

Tim was an organ scholar at University and went on to become director of music in a city centre church. He also free-lanced as an accompanist for professional friends and colleagues to supplement his meagre income. The world of psychotherapy had also always intrigued Tim and he learnt a lot more about music therapy while he was taking a course in basic counselling. A lot of these different strands came together when Tim finally admitted to a vocation to the priesthood in his mid-thirties and he trained at a theological college and was duly ordained to the stipendiary ministry. Music took a back seat during Tim's curacy because the incumbent and the choir master were both very wary of him and anyway, he was there to learn how to be a good priest. He continued to read though and enjoyed the stimulation of the Diocesan Theological Group.

However, soon after Tim was appointed to his own living, he resumed his love of the organ, putting on some recitals with friends and looking more carefully at the useful part music could play in the healing of those with psychological problems. Tim knew enough about the Church before he was ordained to realise that it was never going to provide him with the depth and wide stimulation he needed. He enjoyed parochial ministry and participated fully in the life of the deanery and the diocese but, with the bishop's blessing, he spent one afternoon a week in a hostel for ex-psychiatric patients teaching them ways of making music on various instruments and he continued to provide the local area with some wonderful concerts (using his contacts) about every couple of months. Some clergy in the diocese made the occasional grumbling noise, saying he was more interested in music than the Gospel and they never got the afternoon off to go and do something 'extra-parochial', but Tim actually worked harder than all of them and had a good reputation as a conscientious parish priest. He is, at present, planning his sabbatical break to look at the Theology of Music Making and its Implications for Psychological Well-Being.' The bishop has asked to receive a copy of the paper as soon as it is written!

but they know the competition for such positions is fierce and they will have little chance of coming through the large field of applicants. It is then an opportunity to suggest holding on to the idea, while at the same time examining other criteria for moving or staying and talking about this added vocation to senior staff when the opportunity arises. It presumes, of course, that a diocese is open to older clergy of talent recognising the need for fulfilment inside and outside the strictly parochial system.

In conclusion, all the above discussion is set in a context that has changed, and is still changing. Thirty years ago, from the moment of the call to full-time ministry, an individual was directed by those set above him/her, with some latitude, but not that much, to new work on the presumption that 'authority' knew best. This thinking is now redundant and there is an attitude of self-promotion in many 'younger' clergy, and of democratic process in the parishes.

This can result in some clergy actively seeking preferment, and a flood of applications appearing for a post which should not attract such frenetic activity. On the other hand, some older clergy may be able to analyse the rather infantilising attitudes of the past but be unable to mobilise inner resources to counter the desire for recognition and reward. Where good-will is established and trust exists, the challenge for the Church is to involve older clergy in its larger life. This is essentially a pastoral task for the whole body of Christ to be welcomed by lay and ordained members alike.

THE DISAPPOINTED EVANGELICAL

As a lad, Maurice was expected to go to a middle-of-the-road church with his parents but it was pretty lifeless and boring. He drifted away from any overt expression of Christian faith once he got to university. Maurice pursued a career in banking and eventually met the girl he wanted to marry. She was an active member of an evangelical church and encouraged Maurice to attend with her. Maurice was immediately smitten by the enthusiasm and commitment of many of the church members and he gave his life to Christ within a few months of starting. He offered his services and financial skills, which were gratefully received but he also seemed to have a real gift for pastoral work with the Young People's Fellowship. Maurice felt he was always open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit but the call to full-time stipendiary ministry was still a bit of a shock when it came. He left the bank, sold the family house and started at a residential theological college with his wife and two small children and an income that was less than a tenth of what he had been earning before.

Twenty years later finds Maurice in a well-attended suburban evangelical church with a curate (looking after the church plant on the housing estate), two non-stipendiary assistant ministers, several readers, a youth worker and an effective group of pastoral assistants. He has overseen a million pound extension to the parish church and the Sunday and weekday congregations are still growing. The diocese uses Maurice a lot and he sits on the Board of Finance. However, he has always felt that Biblical teaching prevents women from holding senior leadership positions and he is deeply distressed by the lack of firm moral guidelines coming from the two bishops in the diocese when the issue of homosexuality rose to the surface in the recent national debate. All Maurice's inclinations are to stay loyal to the diocese and the church he loves but he cannot resist the drift to greater local autonomy and a ministry which reflects the primacy of scripture and not the revisionist agenda of the senior staff! For the first time since his conversion, at fifty-three years old, Maurice is thinking of leaving the ordained ministry and the Church of England.

5.2 The responsibility of the clergy themselves: further comments from the Senior Clergy Group (SCG)

We have already asked the extent to which the Church makes clergy feel cherished, but it is equally important that the clergy ask themselves the same question, and hear it in the context of appropriately critical feedback. Episcopate is a shared ministry, with the Bishop and with others (such as Archdeacons, Area/Rural Deans, other ministry colleagues and spiritual directors) but it needs to be more evident.

Clergy who perceive themselves to be undervalued and unappreciated may become disappointed and cynical, losing their sense of belonging to the wider Church community and tempted to 'do their own thing' without reference to, or regard for, others. Where clergy are supported, challenged, nurtured - in other words where real relationship exists - disappointments can be shared and, through the challenge presented, sometimes lead to growth.

The clergy's perception of reward is critical here. There can be a double affirmation in the Bishop consulting clergy colleagues in the choosing of Area/Rural Deans. Too often reward can be seen as being noticed by senior staff and being asked to do yet more. On the other hand affirmation by those to whom clergy minister is of great value. Clergy need to know that others are interested in what they do: that they are 'heard'.

Some things cannot be healed and have to be borne, but not in isolation. Henri Nouwen and TS Eliot both talk of wounded healers who are themselves torn apart. The tensions and the risks of ministry cannot all be removed, nor, necessarily, should they be. Only some can be resolved.

For this to happen the clergy themselves may need to take greater responsibility: for example, for finding themselves a spiritual director, for asking to meet with the Bishop or a member of his team, or simply finding lateral support networks (e.g. cell groups, interest focus groups, work consultants, friends). Clergy are fed and sustained not just by being part of the Church but also by other interests – a life elsewhere. Priesthood and ministry should not be the only reason to get out of bed in the morning.

Therefore we affirm the very strong argument for continued attention to the 'personal hinterland' of the priest i.e. the relationship between spiritual and mental health and the networks that promote and enhance healthy living.

There is no common agenda for a 'one-size-fits-all' solution here because keeping poultry, walking on the moors, line dancing and driving steam trains may be just as valuable as personal therapy or a Myers-Briggs course in personality typing. Networks of good friends and time away from a demanding inner-city setting or a multiple parish living can be just as life and ministry enhancing as a diocesan conference on leadership and growth!

THE CATHOLIC PRIEST

Henry is fifty years old and is unmarried. His vocation was fostered and formed by a lovely old priest who had spent all of his ministry in the East End of London where Henry grew up. After obtaining a First in English Literature at a 'Redbrick' university, Henry went on to read Theology at Oxford whilst training for the ministry and he has now served in three separate, traditional parishes. He is a good preacher and visits assiduously. He pays close attention to the community he serves, taking roles in the schools and in the tenants association and he is much loved. Recently he has become an oblate of a religious community and a recognised Spiritual Director. Although opposed to the ordination of women, he has always played a full part in Deanery Chapter and is a good friend of two female members. His present parish comes under the care of the Provincial Episcopal Visitor, having taken all three resolutions, but Henry admires his diocesan bishop and particularly enjoys the reading group the bishop convenes. Henry teaches liturgy and early church history on the diocesan training scheme.

However, although Henry is content, he does not feel fulfilled. He wonders if his opposition to the ordination of women has stood in the way of a more senior role. He was quite shocked recently to see a fellow priest of less 'seniority' and experience appointed as the Director of Ministry and the CME Officer is well known in the diocese as someone who will choose another committee to sit on rather than attend to any pastoral visiting or schools work. Henry wonders if he should have been more aggressive and 'pushy,' but then he has seen some traditional colleagues who have this attitude become bitter and cynical and he doesn't want that to happen to him.

More than any other feeling, Henry experiences life and ministry as being lonely and the recent death of the old priest who fostered his vocation has just made things worse!

Is there a Life/Ministry balance and is there a wholeness about the holiness of the individual priest? Of course, there are some examples of an excess of self-development courses, conferences and leisure activities that make senior staff and colleagues wonder what work is actually being undertaken by a priest but, thankfully, these examples are far fewer than the other way round!

There can be a particular danger of loneliness for clergy, regardless of their marital or personal situation. Clergy accept that their vocation entails sacrifice but, on the other hand, they find that the Church is often not the living, caring family community they thought it would become for them when they were ordained. All clergy, including Bishops, can be the focus of community whilst not being included in it. The longer they are in ministry, the more acute this can become. As Archbishop Stuart Blanch once observed:

“There is a sense in which every minister of the gospel is diminished by their ministry. If they have any self-knowledge at all, their ministry makes them less confident in themselves, less assured, less doctrinaire, and therefore less secure. They become more aware of the dark places in their own lives and in the lives of others. Anyone who has been long in the ministry will know the time when they have to say ‘I stumble, where once I firmly trod’ .“¹⁵

Therefore, at the root of both the frustration and the fulfilment lies the uniqueness of the calling to ordination. It is a public ministry based upon private conviction, and cannot be conducted in isolation. The calling is hard: it demands much of oneself and all those with whom the clergy are in relationship. Christian ministers know the tension of striving to use all their gifts in the service of God and humanity (including themselves) and therefore looking for work requiring greater skill and responsibility. Yet they are also concerned about faithfulness even more than success, integrity rather than careerism. Consequently the joys and satisfactions of this calling, dealt with by this report, are known to us all.

Finally, a practical observation: priesthood and ministry need to be kept constantly under review. There is an element of personal responsibility on the part of the clergy to develop alternative and even contingency ministry options for an unpredictable future. In simple terms this may entail having a “Plan B” (a sensible alternative arising from self-awareness and imagination) and a “Plan C” (which may be rather more ‘alternative’ but not beyond the pale).

Perhaps some of the general difficulties pertaining to this report arise with those for whom the distinction between ‘calling’ and ‘job’ is not as clear as it once was. However there remain specific issues which we can address and on which we now wish to make particular recommendations.

¹⁵ *The Creation of Adam*, David Runcorn, Grove Books (Grove Spirituality Series, 76)

SLIPPERS AND PIPE

Ralph attended a minor public school and developed a love of chapel, and some skill, in Rugby Union. He could not get into university but went to a reputable teacher training college where he learned to teach Geography and Physical Education. He had always believed in a fairly muscular form of Christianity and during his probationary year of teaching it was suggested that he might like to test his vocation to the ordained ministry. Ralph was a bit reticent about this as his fruity language and love of the oval ball did not go too well with the rather effete clerical models that were often on display. He also liked to drink rather a lot of beer after the Saturday game!

Much to his surprise he was accepted for training and went to a middle-of-the-road theological college in the late '60s where he continued to play and drink hard. He was a bit of a character, he had a wicked sense of humour and his weaknesses were indulged. An unspectacular curacy followed, during which time he got married, and then Ralph found his real niche in the Army Chaplains Department. He played less rugby and spent more time talking about it over a beer in the officers' mess. Ralph had many tours of duty in Northern Ireland, the Balkans and the Middle East and he was a good chaplain but his lack of boundaries was coming under closer scrutiny.

At the age of fifty-two, Ralph found himself in two rural parishes he didn't really want because the Army had thanked him for his services and said 'goodbye.' Parish life bored Ralph, he did the occasional visit and took the funerals and baptisms but his real love was going up to London to see his old mates and support the Premiership Rugby Club he used to play for (in the 'Extra B's')

The bishop and the archdeacon are worried. Ralph was given the freehold at a time when things were less frantic. Numbers are now going down in Ralph's two churches and he doesn't seem to care. He cannot be accused of neglect or dereliction of duty because the Occasional Offices are taken and the Sunday routines are observed... but, nothing is happening. Ralph is now sixty-two, his wife has left him to live with their daughter, and he is content to do the absolute minimum and see out his time. There is a roof over his head, he is well fed and warm, Mrs Brown comes in on Tuesdays and Fridays to clean and cook and he thinks he has made a good fist of a poor prospect. The Church has lost the plot anyway, with women priests and modern liturgies. People don't go to church now in the way they used to; it's no wonder numbers are falling.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The SCG recognises that simply making these recommendations to the Church will not solve the issues around senior clergy but we believe that the initiatives we are recommending will stimulate helpful discussion and generate appropriate action across the Dioceses. If implemented, some of the recommendations will require a nationally agreed approach; others will benefit from tailoring to local circumstances.

Many of the following recommendations have been derived from correspondence with Diocesan CME Officers and others concerning new ideas and best practice. Some arise naturally from the preceding sections of this report; others are included as potentially relevant, although the SCG readily accepts that some will therefore require further discussion and, possibly, funding. These various recommendations and suggestions are initially arranged thematically, and further categorised for particular target audiences.

Recommendations to Diocesan Bishops

- a. Ensure that appraisals and reviews are carried out to a national standard, that they relate to areas of competence, and that they are followed through via the vehicle of CME to provide support to clergy in their present posts
- b. Ensure that appraisals and reviews directly inform the appointments process.
- c. Invite mature and theologically reflective senior clergy to undertake portfolio responsibilities, for example:
 - the recruiting, mentoring and supporting of other clergy, including those in first appointments, and first time training incumbents;
 - deliverance ministry;
 - membership of special study groups responding to church reports or other issues in society;
 - a greater decision making role in respect of local finances.
- d. Consider greater sharing of episcopal and archidiaconal workload with senior clergy, which apart from other benefits, e.g. 'tapping talent', may also help to prepare senior clergy for preferment.
- e. Deploy experienced and suitable senior clergy in the last few years before retirement in critical situations as agents of change or transitional clergy/Bishop's officers. For example:
 - senior clergy with nothing to lose might, specifically, be able to see a Benefice through reorganisation or 'special measures', and leave the subsequent new incumbent free to undertake the next stage of ministry;

AN INCARNATIONAL CALLING

"To the extent that ministry conforms to Christ, it reveals the character of God as revealed in the incarnation. As God in Christ deals with us in a personal way, so all ministry must have a *personal* character - providing in a specific person the focus for the unity and witness of the community. As God calls us into a reconciled fellowship, so all ministry must have a *collegial* character - exercised not just by one person alone but in shared responsibility with colleagues. As the Church is the body of Christ quickened by the Spirit, so the ministry must have a communal character, so that every member is enabled to exercise the gifts which the Spirit gives and so that the whole community is, as far as possible, associated in the process of teaching and decision making. And as the work of Christ was that of the servant Lord who gave his life a ransom for many, so these three characteristics must combine in a ministry of service to the world for which Christ died."

(God's Reign and Our Unity, Anglican-Reformed International Commission Report of 1984, SPCK and St Andrew Press (1984), para 92, p59)

- or, more generally, they could act as catalysts for wider institutional change which might be resisted by younger possibly more defensive clergy.
- f. Develop local strategies for mission and ministry which require all clergy to work in new mission partnerships – for example, clusters of parishes, ecumenical groupings.
 - g. Use the opportunities created by pastoral reorganisation to release senior clergy into a changing situation where they can be used creatively and flexibly - for example, within a locality organised on a 'Minster model' basis.
 - h. Initiate the provision of pastoral care for senior staff by senior clergy.
 - i. Use recently retired senior clergy as rural/area deans and interim ministers, supporting the parish through an interregnum.

Recommendations to Directors of Ministry and CME Officers

- a. Encourage clergy from the outset of ministry to develop professional interests and specialisms, which:
 - are duly encouraged throughout their ministry;
 - offer something additional to the Church in later years;
 - generate possibilities for crossing boundaries when boredom with parish ministry sets in.
- b. Extend the relevance of CME amongst senior clergy, recognising that it is more than the old idea of Post Ordination Training and ought to include a personal and continuing responsibility for one's own educational development, as may be required at the different stages of one's ministry.
- c. Encourage all clergy in continuing professional and educational development through outside programmes and validating bodies, in order to help clergy take new risks and ventures which may, if applicable, lead to further academic qualifications.
- d. Provide assistance where necessary to those senior clergy who may need help or training to take their full part in a competitive system of appointment.
- e. With new ideas coming in from 'younger' curates, assist the process of conversation between them and senior clergy to help each other, catch visions and look at opportunities without either feeling threatened or indulged.
- f. Invite senior clergy to act as selectors, reviewers and appraisers following appropriate training if necessary.

THE ROAD TO SUCCESS?

“Understanding wine should be taught at every theological college as an essential part of the ministry. Develop a taste for claret, dear boy, and you will be starting your journey towards high office.”

(From a fictional letter from a ‘senior clergyman’ to his younger ordained nephew, Seaford Parish magazine June 2005).

“Although the trial of Bishop King brought the diocese [of Lincoln] to the centre of the controversy over ritualism, there is little evidence to show that it had much effect on the parishes. The bishop himself pursued the most moderate of policies. There are only five cases where ritualism comes up in the correspondence, and then usually as complaints made by incumbents against their young curates. The exception was at St. Mary’s, Stamford, where the Marquis of Exeter found it difficult to get ‘both a gentleman and a clergyman’ for a living worth only ninety pounds a year. In consequence this low-church parish found itself with a high-church incumbent who introduced ritual into the services and socialism into the sermons. Gregorian chant, and the rector’s public lectures on socialism brought complaints to the bishop, but the rector’s refusal of an interview at the palace was a model for its kind. ‘It is kind of you to offer me an interview, and I would gladly avail myself to it, if I thought it could be of any use, but my views, though they are most unremunerative, are unchangeable’. He would continue, he said, to give his people what they needed, though it might not be what they thought they wanted. There is unfortunately no record of the bishop’s reply”.

(From the Archivist’s Report (Lincolnshire Archives Committee) when the Alnwick Tower repository of the bishop’s registrar was emptied in 1955).

“In terms of port chaplaincy recruitment, The Mission to Seafarers experiences a high percentage of applications from clergy who are in their last ten years of service. The reasons behind this are often centered around senior clergy not wanting to spend their remaining years ministering in the same way as they have done for the majority of their working lives.....their approach to the society follows a familiar pattern. The first question invariably is, “Am I too old?” When assured they are not, the reasons they give for exploring maritime ministry are set against the background of a desire to:-

1. Minister within a wider framework than the parochial system affords.
2. Be able to develop new skills and take on new challenges.
3. Experience a fulfilling ministry caring for people who are not interested in church politics.

Reflecting on their experiences, clergy who have reached this stage in their pilgrimage feel that the specific focus of parochial ministry restricts their ability to continue their journey when all they see is more of the same stretching ahead.....port chaplaincy allows them to carry on journeying in new and exigent ways.”

The Revd Tom Heffer (Director of Chaplaincy, The Mission to Seafarers)

- g. Invite appropriate senior clergy to participate more directly in the provision of CME, for example as tutors and course leaders.
- h. Ensure de-briefing of senior clergy shortly before retirement, both in terms of replacing the minister *in situ* and also in terms of the wider institution learning about itself. Monitor feedback and brief Bishops and Archdeacons as appropriate.
- i. Use appraisals and reviews to help clergy across boundaries, e.g. between parochial ministry and sector roles, or into other roles outside of the church. ¹⁶

Recommendations to the senior clergy themselves

- a. Take responsibility for pursuing external CME opportunities which provide 'outside development'.
- b. Take responsibility for having a spiritual director/soul friend, participating in a cell group.
- c. Take advantage of regular retreats.
- d. Find a work consultant or mentor.
- e. Exercise and have regular medical checks.
- f. Take a period of time within the final appointment which is not sabbatically funded, but perhaps within CME, to prepare for retirement.
- g. Make use of opportunities afforded by mission agencies. For example, see the statement by the director of chaplaincy for The Mission to Seafarers (page 38) and the Anglican Adviser at Prison Chaplaincy HQ in London (page 40).

Recommendations to central church structures

- a. Establish an optional vocational assessment for clergy as they achieve the age of 50, run nationally to help senior clergy assess the way forward in ministry.
- b. Ensure that clergy development has more of a seamless quality. The roles of the Archbishops' Secretary for Appointments and the Clergy Appointments Adviser should blend in to each other in considering the right settings for priests to grow and be fruitful. A benign but independent view is often of

¹⁶ We recognise that this may have financial implications.

HOW WE TREAT EACH OTHER

“Our relationships with one another in the priesthood are an important part of our service to Christ and the people. When clergy, older and younger, serve one another and learn from one another the whole church is healthier”.

(Michael Ramsey, The Christian Priest Today, SPCK (1972), p71)

“The third thing I want to say, and I think this is probably beyond the terms of this motion but it gives me an opportunity to say it, is that pure arithmetic tells you that a lot of good people will not be appointed. That is just the way of the world and that is the sort of Church we are in. It seems to me that we have to do something quite serious about asking ourselves what we do with those people. There are a lot of very able people in every diocese in the land who could well have been excellent archdeacons or bishops or deans but never were. I do not think it is good enough for bishops just to wring their hands and say, ‘I am sorry, there was nothing for you at the right moment’. I do not think that is good enough. I think it is a waste to the Church. We have lots of very able people who are just ticking off the years to retirement and their gifts and skills are not being used in the best way they could, while at the same time we have bishops and archdeacons chasing their tails because they are too busy. I want to say to the House of Bishops, alongside this work: will you please give some thought to how you care for those people.

I need to mention one phrase which I think will ring a lot of painful bells with a lot of people in this chamber and that is the phrase ‘a disappointed cleric’. Some of you will remember the tragic case of Gary Bennett a few years ago. We must avoid having lots of disappointed clerics who are being under-used and under-valued in the Church, while at the same time we want more vocations. We are not using that huge resource in the best possible way. I think it is time we did something about it. “

(Revd Canon Bob Baker, General Synod senior appointments debate, 2005)

“Usually 62 is the cut off....so the prison service gets something from training people! The experience of prison (chaplancy) can be quite renewing for some folk as it does allow a focus on people rather than buildings!”

(The Revd Michael Kavanagh, Anglican Adviser at Prison Chaplaincy HQ)

considerable value to an institution undergoing rapid change and a society that views its workforce differently from previous decades. The Archbishops' officers, including the Adviser for Bishop's Ministry, can provide such a role.¹⁷

- c. Invite senior clergy to participate in the development and training of Bishops.
- d. Engender a flexible attitude to retirement, recognising, even if there is no stipend after a given age, that age is not a barrier to useful ministry.
- e. Consider giving some financial recognition for additional responsibilities undertaken.
- f. Develop an open, voluntary, national and computerised register of interests, gifts and skills within the Church – and make use of it.¹⁸
- g. Establish a centrally structured scheme for clergy sabbaticals.¹⁹
- h. Encourage senior clergy to take centrally funded sabbaticals at around 58 years of age; these could be geared towards a final ministerial appointment and, maybe, look on into a productive retirement.
- i. Encourage the Church to allow its clergy to be resources to those in other working environments or ministries - or example, to offer 10% of their time to the wider Church and community.

¹⁷ It should also be noted that changes proposed in the Clergy Terms of Service Report, particularly in the regional deployment of Human Resources expertise, will also bring the roles of these Archbishops' officers into high relief and their working briefs could change considerably.

¹⁸ NB. This is different from personal ministry records ("The Blue Files").

¹⁹ The central policy of the Methodist Church on sabbaticals warrants examination.

FULFILMENT

“Barnabas seems to have had exactly the right qualities for the team that the apostles chose to take care of the welfare of the Greek-speaking widows in the Jerusalem church. But for some reason, he was not appointed. Although this is pure speculation – could it be simply that Barnabas didn’t put himself forward? That he trusted the Lord to guide the selection, whether or not he was one of those selected?

Many of us find this extraordinarily difficult. From the playground – when we hope to catch the eye of the captain picking his football team; to the church elections – when we think that our faithfulness in the children’s church might give us brownie points; to the workplace – where we host a little dinner party before the annual promotions exercise: we are all inclined to use methods (subtle or blatant) to win favour or support.

The fact that Barnabas was not appointed to the widows’ distribution team actually set him free for other assignments. So that when there was an explosion of conversions in Antioch, it was he who was sent to help. But realising how much there was to do, he went to find Paul. The two of them ministered together for a year, before going out as delegates from Antioch, first to Jerusalem and then to Cyprus.

In a seamless transfer of priority, the leadership then passed from Barnabas to Paul. And Barnabas, the encourager, the enabler, continued to work with the great apostle, playing second fiddle through times of fruitfulness and persecution.

When Barnabas later split from Paul in order to encourage Mark, he disappears from the pages of the Acts. But he does not, of course, disappear from the pages of the book of life. Those who step down, who help to develop the skills of others, who do the “back room” jobs – their names are written in letters as bold and gold as that of Paul.”

*(Helen Parry, London Institute of Contemporary Christianity,
Website July 2004)*

7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Over two years the SCG has attempted to address some of the issues which have emerged from the Bishop of Norwich's initial request. It has gleaned a number of practical examples of those affected, commented upon relevant aspects of the structure and ethos of the Church, and examined some of the underlying personal and emotional factors. It has also offered a number of suggested practical recommendations, which may helpfully benefit from further work in this field. In this it has also been greatly assisted by consulting periodically with three advisers from outside the group.²⁰

In offering this study, the Clergy Appointments Adviser and the SCG recognise that the question of senior clergy in the Church of England is an immense and complex subject. This report does not claim to be an exhaustive study, but it does offer pointers to Bishops and senior staff, both to enable further work in this area and – we trust - to support all that is already ongoing in different Dioceses.

There are some things which can be done which will make a strategic difference, in particular the establishment of a national vocational assessment centre (recommendation 6.4 a.). Whilst they will not solve all the present difficulties in this area, they will lead to improvements. The SCG is therefore relaxed about how such initiatives are progressed and, further, recognises that a number of current discussions and structural changes in terms of Human Resource implications will impact upon the detail.

The achievability of this report's recommendations will depend upon the mind and will of Dioceses to implement them, with appropriate support from central structures and with the co-operation of the senior clergy themselves.

What is most important is that all clergy, including senior clergy, are given the opportunity not merely to avoid long-term frustration but to find genuine fulfilment in ministry – especially during the last ten years of full-time service.

**Revd John Lee
and The Senior Clergy Group**

²⁰ The Rt Revd Graham James, The Ven Nigel Peyton, and The Revd Simon Pothen.

FRUSTRATION

“Baby boomers and ‘mature’ workers (those 55 and above) are feeling little loyalty to their current employers. These employees are bottlenecked, with too many people competing for far too few leadership positions. They’re distrustful, fearful, and defensive, knowing that they’re ‘too old’ to easily find work elsewhere....They’re struggling to update their skills, and they’re feeling burned out after 30-plus years on the job. Meanwhile, they stand back and watch as recruiting, training, and leadership development [resources], as well as promotion opportunities, are overwhelmingly directed at younger employees, with little thought to the skills and experience that the over-55 crowd can bring to bear....”

(“It’s Time To Retire”, Harvard Business Review, March 2004, p50)

ENCOURAGEMENT

“Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted;
but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.” *(Isaiah 40.30-31)*

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

“We have come a long way, Christianly speaking, from the justly criticised notion of ‘submission to the will of God’ which is in danger of weakening and softening the fine steel of the human will, brandished against all the powers of darkness and diminishment. We must understand this well, and cause it to be understood: to find and to do the will of God (even as we diminish and as we die) does not imply either a direct encounter or a passive attitude. I have no right to regard the evil that comes upon me through my own negligence or fault as being the touch of God. I can only unite myself to the will of God (as endured passively) *when all my strength is spent*, at the point where my activity, fully extended and straining towards betterment (understood in ordinary human terms), finds itself continually counter-weighted by forces tending to halt me or overwhelm me. Unless I do everything I can to advance or resist, I shall not find myself at the *required point* – I shall not submit to God as much as I might have done or as much as He wishes. If, on the contrary, I persevere courageously, I shall rejoin God across evil, deeper down than evil; I shall draw closer to Him; and at that moment the optimum of my ‘communion in resignation’ necessarily coincides (by definition) with the maximum of fidelity to the human task.”

(Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, “Le Milieu Divin”, Collins 1960, p72-3)

VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT

“We ask God that you may receive from him all wisdom and spiritual understanding for full insight into his will, so that your way of life may be worthy of the Lord and entirely pleasing to him. We pray that you may bear fruit in active goodness of every kind, and grow in the knowledge of God.”
(Colossians 1. 9-10)

“And one does not presume to take this honour but takes it only when called by God.” *(Hebrews 5.49)*

TRUE AMBITION

“I am no longer my own but yours.
Your will, not mine, be done in all things,
wherever you may place me,
in all that I do and in all that I may endure;
when there is work for me and when there is none;
when I am troubled and when I am at peace.
Your will be done when I am valued and when I am disregarded;
when I find fulfilment and when it is lacking;
when I have all things and when I have nothing.
I willingly offer all I have and am to serve you, as and where you choose.”

(Methodist Covenant Prayer)

**NUMBERS AND AGE PROFILE OF
CHURCH OF ENGLAND CLERGY**

A MINISTRY DIVISION NUMBERS FOR 2004

Stipendiary full-time	8852
Stipendiary-part time	254
Dignitaries	373
Chaplains	1238
NSMs	1855
OLMs	545
<i>Readers</i>	<i>10603</i>

Source: Sue Edward, Secretary DRACS Committee,
9 January 2006 (email to CAA)

B MINISTRY DIVISION CLERGY NUMBERS FOR 2002

	Up to 55 years	55 years +	Totals
Senior Staff	420	1003	
Incumbents	2439	1770	
<i>Sub-total 1 (nearly all Freehold clergy)</i>	<i>2859</i>	<i>2773</i>	<i>5632</i>
Incumbent Status	1189	664	
Assistant Staff	1229	153	
Others	221	151	
<i>Sub-total 2 (Other clergy)</i>	<i>2629</i>	<i>968</i>	<i>3597</i>
Part-time	144	172	316
Totals	5632	3913	9545
<i>percent</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>41</i>	

Source: Jim Smith, Ministry Division,
14 June 2005 (email to CAA)

C CLERGY PENSIONS SCHEME MEMBERS AS AT 2002

FEMALE

Age	Stipendiary/Parochial	Total membership
<30	35	35
31-35	81	83
36-40	117	122
41-45	216	225
46-50	281	290
51-55	353	361
56-60	323	331
61-65	136	140
65+	22	22
Total	1564	1609
	<i>percent over 55 years</i>	30.75

MALE

Age	Stipendiary/Parochial	Total membership
<30	94	97
31-35	278	298
36-40	613	653
41-45	933	981
46-50	1256	1308
51-55	1284	1326
56-60	1534	1593
61-65	1228	1278
65+	278	283
Total	7498	7817
	<i>percent over 55 years</i>	40.54

TOTAL		
Age	Stipendiary/Parochial	Total membership
31-35	359	381
36-40	730	775
41-45	1149	1206
46-50	1537	1598
51-55	1637	1687
56-60	1857	1924
61-65	1364	1418
65+	300	305
Total	9062	9426
	<i>percent over 55 years</i>	38.85

Source: Richard Marriot, Pensions Development Manager
14 June 2005 (email to CAA Office)

MEMBERS OF THE SENIOR CLERGY GROUP

- Janet BEADLE -

Rev Canon Janet Beadle is vicar of 3 commuter-rural parishes in the Diocese of Lincoln. She is Bishop's Adviser for Women in Ministry, Vocations Adviser, Pastoral Selector, a former member of General Synod, and is currently reading for an M.A. in Pastoral Theology. She is kept sane by her cat, long walks and Star Trek!

- Frank DEXTER -

Just retired, having worked in Newcastle Diocese with a seven year sojourn in Peterborough. He is married to a schoolteacher, and they have two daughters and two grandsons. He has been a parish priest but also dabbled in consultancy and appraisal – which he will continue in retirement.

- Chris HOLLINGSHURST -

Worked for Parcellforce for nine years as Logistics Planning Manager prior to ordination. Trained at Ridley Hall, Cambridge. Ordained 1999. Served curacy in rural Cambridgeshire team ministry. Now incumbent in SW London. Married with three children.

- John LEE -

Ex-marine scientist experienced as a priest in housing estate, inner-city and semi-rural ministry. Group Analyst and Psychotherapist. Currently, Clergy Appointments Adviser having long-term withdrawal symptoms from traditional parish ministry!

- Tony NEAL -

1968 curacy in inner-city Leeds. Following teacher training became chaplain/Head of RE at CofE comprehensive school. Moved to Cornwall in 1981 as church school inspector with rural parish. Also served as children's officer and stewardship advisor. 1994 founded the Godrevy Team Ministry: 5 rural and urban parishes in deprived part of West Cornwall. A former member of General Synod and former Chair of Truro House of Clergy. Married, 4 children, now a grandfather.

- John NIGHTINGALE -

After a curacy in Manchester, John held posts in mission and adult education at national and diocesan level in Nigeria and England. Since 1995 he has been Vicar of Rowley Regis in the Black Country. His wife Janet died from cancer in 2001. He has two adult children.

- Fiona STEWART-DARLING -

Studied Chemistry and worked for British Gas as a Senior Scientist prior to ordination. Trained at Trinity College, Bristol. Ordained Deacon 1991, ordained Priest 1994. Served curacy in the Cotswolds, then spent 10yrs as University Chaplain. Currently Chaplain in Canary Wharf, London.