ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

"DOING SOMETHING FOR GOD"

EMPOWERING MINISTRIES EXERCISED BY OLDER PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

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Acknowledgements

This research investigated ministries exercised by older people in the church and what empowers them in their ministries. Existing research into collaborative ministry has paid limited attention to age and research into older people in the church has focused more on their ministry needs, than the ministries they exercise. Therefore, there was a dual gap in knowledge at a time when the church is facing a contemporary issue of ageing population and congregations.

In addition to examining theoretical perspectives behind collaborative ministry, age and empowerment, original research was conducted in a parish where older people were visibly exercising ministry in three distinct ministry projects. Two methodologies were used: autoethnography and case study, using interview, observation, and documentary analysis. These were chosen to give scope for the voices of experiences of older people to be heard.

The research found older people were working together in ministries and identified some of the influences on their undertaking and continuing in ministry. It uncovered an unexpected level of contentment which led to some additional research in a second parish, where experiences were less positive. In both contexts, evidence emerged of the importance of power, leadership roles and understanding how ministries can be affected by age and life-transitions.

The research concluded older people do exercise a wide range of ministries in the church and are equipped with gifts for them. However, they can face challenges of ageism and transitions which can disempower them. Issues of empowerment were considered with the conclusion that the key to empowerment of older people in ministry lies not so much in any particular structure or pattern of ministry, but in the extent to which they are connected to the organic whole body of the church. Some steps to consider for their empowerment were identified.

Keywords: collaborative ministry – church – older people - empowerment

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Introduction

An Image of Ministry

Photograph: R. Goatly, 2012. Kagera Valley from Murgwanza

In you, O LORD, I take refuge; let me never be put to shame.
In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me and save me.
Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress, to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress.

Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel.
For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth.
Upon you I have leaned from my birth; it was you who took me from my mother's womb.
My praise is continually of you.

I have been like a portent to many, but you are my strong refuge.
My mouth is filled with your praise, and with your glory all day long.
Do not cast me off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength is spent.

But I will hope continually, and will praise you yet more and more.
My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all day long, though their number is past my knowledge.
I will come praising the mighty deeds of the Lord God, I will praise your righteousness, yours alone.

O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.
So even to old age and grey hairs, O God, do not forsake me until I proclaim your might to all the generations to come.

Psalm 71: 1-9, 14-18[1]

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[1] As noted on page iv, this and all references to Scripture are taken from The Bible, New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise stated in the text.

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As I reflected on what I had learned through researching ministries exercised by older people in the church, this image became a visual metaphor for both ministry and the experience of the research journey itself. It is an image of a place where I have spent some time in ministry each year for the last eight years. Here the context and culture is far removed from places of ministry at home. It is not the context in which this research took place, but it somehow speaks directly into it. In this place there is the capacity for profound silence, but it holds a history of struggle and suffering that was far from silent. It holds memories of times so painful that those who ministered in them find it hard to give them voice and the bodies of those who were its victims are silenced forever.

A close look at the image reveals a terrain of steep, rocky tracks, lonely paths, scattered homes where there is isolated struggle for survival, but also places of joyful meeting with communities of resilient, resourceful people. Some parts of the image are clearly visible, while others, like the river valley far below, but not so distant, are covered by cloud. Unless you know the place, you could not know that beneath the cloud is the river that separates Rwanda and the Kagera region of NW Tanzania and further round to the left, is the border with Burundi. This is a 'valley of the shadow of death' where over the years millions have sought refuge from violence and persecution and people of God have ministered with compassion out of the poverty of their resources to give sustenance and hope. Such ministries were not, perhaps never are, without great cost to themselves and their environment. It has been a price they have continued to pay long after those with whom ministry was offered have moved on.

I have come to value this place for what it has taught me about God, myself and ministry and the experience of working collaboratively. On some mornings, you can stand here and the whole valley may be almost completely hidden in cloud, just as some mornings when I step out in ministry, it feels like setting out into an unseeable place and I pray for guidance that I might tread faithfully on unknown paths. Sometimes I have stood here and, knowing what lies within and beneath the seemingly peaceful surface, recall the temptation of Jesus, taken to a high mountain: "and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me'" (Matthew 4:9). For another person who has stood in that same place with me, it is an image of what God saw when he created Eden in its perfection and beauty. But in both there lies a reminder that we live in a fallen world and as people of God each of us is called, whether lay or ordained, to a ministry that in some form is about renewal and reconciliation with God, wherever and in whatever way God shows us.

In the foreground of this picture is a rock. It is an image I knew in my spiritual exploration of calling to ministry long before I saw it for the first time. It became an image place of encounter and conversation with God. There I could speak my fears and know his voice giving reassurance and sense of identity, confidence and purpose. It was a place of meeting I could not have imagined, but when I saw it for the first time, I knew it with an intimacy beyond words or understanding. Now it is a place where I go to pray, to stand and look or maybe sit awhile and sometimes discover afresh that affirmation of purpose in the presence of God. Here, the words of Psalm 71 seem especially apt:

> "Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress, to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress; O Lord, you alone are my hope. I have trusted you, O Lord, from childhood; I will praise your mighty deeds, O Sovereign Lord; I will tell everyone that you alone are just" (Psalm 71: 3 and 5).

It is a reminder that all ministry begins with God and is accomplished with God. Most of all, this is a place where I have a sense of wholeness and belonging that is hard to define, but perhaps is what we each long to know in our journeys of life, faith and ministry.

As this research was prompted by my own story and experience, I have begun with this metaphor image, with the rock that represents my own starting point into what was named as ministry and some of the rocky paths along which I have travelled in ministry, as well as joyous encounters with people along the way. Somehow, here it does not seem to matter in the way it does at home that I have entered older age. But here, just as at home, I bring to ministry all that is me: my background, life and church experiences and the values that come from them, especially those that have given me a passion for issues of justice and sensitivity to experiences of people who are marginalised or feel excluded. All these also are things I bring to this research.

The intention to research

I chose to use the concept of 'journey' to shape how I have approached writing the research, setting out and observing the context in which the research travels, choosing the methodology as the route by which the question will be explored and gathering data from conversations with people on the way. This is for two reasons. Firstly, journey is at the heart of so many accounts of ministry in Scripture, from Abram called to set out from Ur (Genesis 12:1-9) and the great Exodus journey of God's people, led by Moses, (Exodus 12:31ff). It is ever present in the ministry and teaching of Jesus, there in Paul's calling while on a journey (Acts 9) and in his missionary journeys (Acts 16-21). These were physical journeys, but the story also is one of inner journey with God and of faith, and in

the transforming call of Jesus to those first disciples into their ministry, "follow me and I will make you fish for people" (Matthew 4:19). Secondly, the research subject is ministries of older people and life itself is often spoken of as a journey, especially when considering issues of ageing (Sudbery, 2009; Rohr, 2011; Winter, 2013; Capps, 2014).

However, as this research is presented for a Professional Doctorate in Practical Theology, it must derive from practice and seek to inform future professional practice. Researching practice and undertaking a research project have both been described as a journey (Cameron and Duce, 2013) or a learning journey (O'Leary, 2004, p.1). Moreover, research of this nature requires reflection on experience, and writing reflectively from experience can "enable hearers and readers to respond appropriately to the various elements of the tradition and creatively re-employ them when navigating their own personal or corporate journeys through life" (Walton, 2014, p.xiii). For this reason, each chapter concludes with a reflection as a summary and building block of learning. These building blocks of learning are drawn together in the concluding chapter. It is my hope that this research will enable others, as it has me, to reflect creatively on what can be learned about empowering ministries of older people in a way that shapes both understanding and future approaches to, and patterns of, ministry.

The dual focus of the research brings together exploration of the nature of ministry that is described as collaborative ministry and the ministries exercised by older people in the church. Although there is existing research into collaborative ministry, there is little that considers it from a lay perspective and little that attends to issues of diversity, including age and gender. Similarly, although there is a growing body of research into the experiences of older people in the church, this tends to focus on ministry to them and on developing strategies to meet their pastoral needs. There is little that focuses on the ministries that they do in fact exercise or the voices of their experiences in ministry. Here is a dual gap in knowledge worthy of research at this level.

The specific research question was not identified immediately, but was formed as a paradox emerged through reflecting on experience in ministry. Personal experience of going into ministry in my 50s as part of a collaborative ministry initiative was disempowering and yet ministry alongside a group of older people was empowering and enriching. Therefore, the question became, 'what is it that empowers older people in their ministries' and, by implication, what may disempower them. It is alluded to in the sub-title, 'empowering ministries exercised by older people in the church', which is deliberately ambiguous to convey the thesis, or research statement (Trafford and Leshem,

2008), that ministries *are* being exercised by older people and that these ministries have capacity to be empowering of the church. It was my assumption that the answer may lie in greater understanding of good practice in collaborative ministry, but in a context in which older people tend to be seen more as a problem than a gift to the life and ministry of the church, it might ask how collaboration in ministry is impeded by issues of ageism, power and disempowerment.

Three conceptual themes run through the research: collaborative ministry, age and empowerment or disempowerment, and these interrelate when the focus is on ministries exercised by older people. The concept of collaborative ministry can be presented as complex and is still ill-defined. Initially the idea of complexity was attractive and arguments that true collaborative ministry cannot exist except in a radical re-shaping of organisational structures and relationships in the church were persuasive. However, I have come to a thesis as a result of research that collaborative ministry can be defined simply as people, lay or ordained, working together for some shared ministry purpose. This minimalist approach is open to the challenge that it fails to take into account issues of organisational structures and power, dynamics of power in interpersonal relationships, and the potential for discrimination to determine the who and how of inclusion or exclusion. However rather than ignoring these important issues, they are considered throughout, through the lens of my experience and experiences of older people who are exercising ministries. What emerges is greater understanding of older people in ministry and affirmation of the rich variety of ministries they offer, and the thesis that the key to their empowerment lies not so much in structures of collaboration, but in their connectivity to the organic whole.

The research uses two methodologies: Autoethnography, drawing on personal experience and learning in ministry, and Case Study to explore and gain deeper understanding of the experiences of older people in ministry in their parish contexts. Methods used for Case Study include documentary data analysis, interviews and some observation. Some theological reflection, itself described as a "common methodology of theological thinking" (Graham, Walton and Ward, 2005, p.12) is also threaded through the research, drawing on 'Theology by Heart', a process of engaging with lived experience and learning through "conversational encounters with other people, other world-views and with God" (Graham, Walton and Ward, 2005, p.18). Many of the Psalms in the Bible, including Psalm 71 with which I began, are examples of Theology by Heart. It may draw on records of experience, such as might be found in autoethnography or in records of listening to others, as for example in interviews. The idea of conversation is integral to this form of reflection with

"thoughts going between self and others in an ongoing conversation which is both internal and external" (Ward, 2007, p.78). It is also argued that such a process may give voice to those to find themselves marginalised or silenced, as demonstrated in the work of Reit Bons-Storm (1996). Her concern was particularly with the experiences of women, but may be especially relevant where the goal is social justice or transformation (Graham, Walton and Ward, 2005, p.19). All of this makes this kind of reflection appropriate for the research subject and the methodologies it uses.

Some initial assumptions of meaning

Several terms are used in describing the research context that may imply assumptions of meaning. They are each substantial topics in their own right and require some clarification as to how they are being used here.

Ministry

I resisted beginning with a firm definition of ministry because part of the purpose of the research journey was to explore it for deeper understanding. However, the Church of England, the ecclesial context of the research, asserts that "all who are baptised are called to ministry, whether that is lay or ordained" and "God calls young people and older ones, wealthy and poorer. The Church's ministers come from all walks of life, social classes, ethnic backgrounds and educational abilities" (Church of England 2015a). While that helps identify who can be involved in ministry, it may imply it is exercised only by those within the organisation and does not define what ministry is. Therefore, I took as a starting definition "work done by anyone whether lay or ordained, paid or unpaid, full-time or part-time which they regard as part of God's mission in the world" (Cameron and Duce, 2013, p.xvii). I assumed this was mediated by baptism. This fits with how many contemporary writers describe ministry as the work of all Christians, using various words like "all faithful disciples" (Greenwood, 2002, p.111), "whole church" (Pickard, 2009; Heywood, 2011) "the vocation of baptism" (Astley, 2010, p. 80). Thus it can be argued that "(e)very Christian has a ministry, in and outside the Church, not just the clergy…(and) ordination is not a commissioning for ministry, but a setting apart for a particular kind of ministry," (Tomlin, 2014, ch. 6). This has challenged the Church of England, where the 'inherited model' of being church until recently assumed the predominance of "a single full-time and stipendiary clergyperson… entrusted with the cure of souls of one parish" (Croft, 1999, p.11). There has been significant movement in the last 40 years, which is not covered in detail here, but is traced by various authors (Greenwood, 1994; 2002; Croft, 1999, 2008; Pickard, 2009).

Even so, while these definitions sound inclusive, in practice there remain distinctions between ministries and restrictions on who can exercise them. In what the Church of England describes as a 'further calling', or vocation, there are authorised lay or ordained ministries for which there must be a discernment process and training. These include ordained ministry as Deacon and/or Priest, Reader, sometimes referred to as Licensed Lay Reader, Church Army Evangelist and The Religious Life, (Church of England 2015b). In addition, within these ministries there is an organisational hierarchy of authority and responsibility. It is likely also that there will be age barriers to entering training for most, if not all these 'further callings' and to decisions about whether it can be stipendiary or non-stipendiary ministry. The application of these may vary between Dioceses. At the time of research, in my Diocese no one who would be 54 or over at the point of ordination could be accepted to train for stipendiary ministry (the limit was 57 for non-stipendiary). Given that there could be a lengthy period of discernment before acceptance for training which would be for at least 2 years, it meant anyone over 50 was likely to be excluded from entering stipendiary ministry even though they may have many years of ministry to offer.

However, my assumptions about ministry also were shaped by early life experience in the Baptist tradition. Brought up in a family in which members held key lay positions in the running of the church, I was taught to respect and not question the Minister, who had undergone training and was called by God first, and then by the church, to its leading and pastorate. As a child, therefore, I assumed ministry attached to the person with that name and associated the language of ministry with ordination. My parents' involvement in the church was, so far as I could see, something they considered an obligation, an assumed responsibility that came with belonging to the church. I do not recall anyone ever explaining the theology behind the tradition and key principle of priesthood of all believers even when the time came for me to be baptised and join the church.

But if ministry in my young mind was the work of the ordained, by the time I journeyed into lay ministry in the church, I was convinced that it was neither confined to the work of the ordained, nor within the boundaries of the church. I did not think of what I considered my subsequent calling to ordained ministry as something ontologically different, but rather being set apart for a particular ministry within the body of the church in which all exercise ministries of different kinds. However, the reality in practice is more complex and

influenced by organisational culture and structures so that difference and label may somehow mean some ministries are considered more 'proper' than others.

Collaborative ministry

Collaborative ministry has become a commonly used phrase when considering patterns of ministry and is generally assumed to be a good thing (Robertson, 2007). It is more than collaboration in the sense of cooperation, which may take place in different ways and at different levels, between and within churches, in leadership, in projects and activities. At its simplest it describes people working together in ministry, lay and ordained, but it should be a purposeful way of working in that it "involves people working together, using their gifts in a co-operative way that is most effective for the witness and mission of the Church" (Green, 2009, p.84). It draws on the theology of ministry as the vocation of the whole people of God. Although it is often thought of as something new, arguably it has been an influence in the church for several decades and previously might have been called, shared ministry, every-member ministry or priesthood of all believers (Robertson, 2007). It is a term in contemporary use in the Church of England and collaboration is a criterion for selection to train for authorised ministry, although it still refers to collaborative ministry as one of several forms of shared ministry (Church of England 2015c).

Theoretical perspectives on ministry and collaborative ministry are explored further in Chapters 2 and in Appendix 1.

Age and older people

For the purposes of the research, the arbitrary age of 60 is used to define 'older' people. This is generally recognised and used in the literature and in national statistics, but is not without some contention. Changes in demographics, with people living longer, means a 'new- or young- old' age group is emerging of those between 60 and 70+, whose experiences and expectations in ministry may differ from those aged 75+ (Morisy, 2011). The research did not have an upper age limit so could embrace a wider age-range and could be open to identify and explore whether there is any evidence of difference in approaches to and experiences of ministry among those who are in the younger, or new-old group and those who are 'older old,' over 75.

Issues of age and ageing were part of the personal experience I brought into this research, and a reflexive approach was necessary in order to listen as objectively as possible to the experiences of those who would become participants in the research.

Ageism

Ageism is "discrimination or unfair treatment based on a person's age" (Age UK, 2013). Age is a social division and discrimination can occur because of youth or old age and all points in between. Issues of power are central to understanding how this and other forms of discrimination operate and what challenges there might be to empowerment.

The impact of ageism is documented by authors such as Hughes and Mtezuka, 1992; Bytheway, 1995; Thompson, 2005. At a macro level discrimination can impact on policy including allocation of resources. At a micro level of personal experience, it can affect self-confidence, sense of worth and well-being and may influence decisions about participating with others in activity, including ministry. Paper 2 (Appendix 2) examined ageism by using a sociological model developed in the 1990s (Thompson, 1992; 2006; 2011) to explore these multi-level processes and to consider how that impacts on experiences in the church. Ageism is one factor that may affect whether older people are seen as agents or merely recipients of ministry in the church.

Theoretical perspectives on age and ageing are explored in greater detail in Chapter 3 and in Appendix 2.

Empowerment and disempowerment

In using the term empowerment, I draw on having worked in social work and criminal justice education and training in the 1990s when it first came into common use in that context as a component in practice methods with individuals, groups and communities. Then it was a word used with only developing understanding of the complexity of what it involved, but a great deal has been written about it since (see for example, Mullender and Ward, 1991; Braye and Preston-Shoot, 1995; Adams, 1996; 2003; 2008; Dalrymple and Burke, 2006; Thompson, 2007; Mullender, Ward and Fleming, 2013; Payne, 2014), all of which has highlighted the need to understand the role of a wide range of issues including: human agency, responsibility, power, oppression, resilience and strengths (Thompson, 2007). Empowerment places emphasis on helping people draw on their own resources to effect change in their lives. It can be understood as a process or an outcome and will resonate with words such as partnership, participation, enabling and facilitating (Parker and Randall, 1997, cited in Oko, 2008, pp.100-1).

Disempowerment relates to feelings of lack of power and control over or in one's own circumstances or situation. In some settings, such as social care, it has been shown to be the result of factors such as the attitudes of practitioners, denial of opportunity, controlling leadership or practice, restriction of choice or lack of information (Kam, 2002,

cited in Adams, 2008). Empowerment and disempowerment therefore cannot ignore the existence and impact of experiences of discrimination and oppression, and must take account of issues of power and how it is exercised.

Theoretical perspectives on empowerment are explored further in Chapter 4 and link with the exploration of discrimination in Appendix 2.

Justice

I refer briefly to justice because I consider all forms of discrimination and oppression to be matters of injustice. Therefore, ageism is a matter of injustice. When embarking on the research I assumed it rested on an underpinning value of social justice which recognises the impact of social inequalities on people's lives. Having such a value of social justice should include a "commitment to addressing and tackling these injustices experienced by service users" (Oko, 2008). However, the concept of justice also is complex. Social justice is perhaps most commonly used to refer to allocation of economic resources and has links with liberation theology and the social emancipation of the oppressed (Boff and Boff, 1988). A 'prosthetic view' such as is adopted by Pattison (1997) extends this by adding to concerns for meeting basic human needs, such as food, health care, the means to "develop their full physical ad intellectual potential to participate as fully as they are able in their own society and destiny" (Pattison, 1997, pp.14-15). Other authors consider social justice from the perspective of institutions, political and non-political, formal and informal that co-ordinate our lives together (McCracken, 2014) which allows its application to the church as well as wider society.

Chapter 1

Forming the Research Question and a Conceptual Framework

In this Chapter, I describe how and why I determined the Research Question and the way I would try to answer it. My own story provides the contextual background of experience out of which the research question emerged and explains the reasons why it was considered important enough to be the focus of doctoral research.

Contextual introduction

Over the last thirteen years I have had experience in lay and ordained ministries in the Church of England and have worked in four different parish contexts. Recently I moved again and returned to the first church in which I was in lay ministry, but now as an ordained priest. It has been a personal journey in time and practice and one in which I have observed and experienced different patterns of ministry and ecclesial traditions. It has challenged and changed my understanding of ministry and raised questions about how ministry is exercised and why some boundaries affect who is recognised as ministering.

The experience began in a parish initiative that involved the formation of a Ministry and Mission team (MMT) in which lay and ordained worked together in leadership in a church that explicitly sought to value and support all-member ministry. Role descriptions included responsibility to empower others in their ministries and the development was informed by relational and collaborative principles that also placed emphasis on spiritual gifting and the commission of all the baptised to ministry and mission. Joining the ministry team marked a dramatic change in my personal and economic status, leaving behind a career in which I had progressed to positions of responsibility at a national level and international consultancy. At the time I believed my calling was to ordained parish ministry, but initially this was channelled into a full-time lay ministry post in the MMT. It was not an easy transition to make. I was then aged 52 and so during the following period of thirteen years crossed the threshold into 'older age'. That also was a difficult transition. I struggled with it personally and also because it had implications for the types of ministry I could exercise within the church in that Diocese. As far as I was concerned I was at a peak of employability and had no desire to slow down. I had in fact turned down an opportunity for significant promotion in order to pursue what I understood to be God's calling into church ministry.

That first period of ministry lasted five years during which time there were some challenges to our efforts to put collaborative principles into practice including a need for greater clarity over the relationship between roles and how they fitted into intra and inter church structures. There were unresolved issues about the influence of power, gender and theology on relationships within the team. On a wider level the experience raised questions about the nature of ministry and the challenges of collaborative approaches to ministry, which were explored elsewhere from the perspective of a lay person in the team (Goatly, 2010).

My responsibility was pastoral ministry and I developed an unexpected, and for me initially unwelcome, focus on ministry among older people. Although I had extensive work experience with people, this mostly had been with younger people and families. I thought ministry among these groups would be more exciting and generative, they were after all often spoken of as the future of the church. However, in time I discovered a passion for ministry among older people and especially among those who were on the margins of the church. I was concerned for those who expressed themselves to be overlooked or unheard in a church that called itself a family, but seemed to forget you do not cease to be part of a family as you get older. Some had had significant roles in ministry in earlier years and were expressing a sense of loss and of being regarded more as a problem or hindrance to future growth.

One of the projects that came out of that concern was an intergenerational Story-sharing Group. Its rationale was in part to encourage a sense of belonging with each other and in the church community as well as a means of sharing the inheritance of knowledge and wisdom and other gifts they had to offer. The group met monthly, shared and recorded stories that were transformed into books of memories and annual exhibitions open to the church, local schools and community around it. The experience inspired me to see the potential these older people had to play a part in mission and ministry of the church (Goatly, 2008). There was some external recognition of this understanding when the group was given a diocesan award for its contribution to mission in changing times.

The confidence the group had in their own stories grew by sharing and listening to each other. Even in this simple act of telling stories, there was some reclaiming of power, as Morton suggests, "Speaking first to be heard is power over. Hearing to bring forth speech is empowering" (Morton, 1985, cited in Bons-Storm, 1996, p.11). My role facilitated the speaking and modelled the listening. Slowly, the group began to identify how their stories fitted with God's story and looked for ways to share that with others. Their exhibitions

proved the connecting ground both for relationships within the church and building bridges of understanding and channels of communication beyond church walls. The group continued to meet after I left that church and produced another book and a video, but has not held any more large-scale exhibitions. It remains a means for some to find a way into, or back into, the church and a channel of pastoral care among themselves.

Developing a research rationale and question

The rationale for this research grew from reflecting on that experience in lay ministry and asking what good practice in collaborative ministry might look like. The question became more focused as a paradox in experience was exposed between the journey I made into ministry, which I experienced as disempowering and described as 'dismantling' (Goatly, 2010, p.21) and the enriching and energising experience of sharing in ministry with older people. I wanted to understand what it was that had empowered them and how as a church we might better draw from their experiences to use the resources older people can offer to the church in ministry.

By the time plans for undertaking research began to take shape I had spent a year at theological college before being ordained and was serving simultaneously in two contrasting parish contexts. I had completed an autoethnographic study of my experience in lay ministry and considered the possibility of using an ethnographic methodology to research ministries of older people in the contexts in which I was then working. I had become even more convinced of the vital role older people play in our churches and had a practical commitment to ministry among and with them. However, a further move in 2013 took me to another church where the majority of the congregation were older people and with some activities run almost entirely by them that were distinct ministries of that church. These included a Lunch Club, Coffee Shop and Housegroups. As in previous churches older people also were playing significant roles in the worship, pastoral and administrative life of the church and its ministry. The research finally took place in this church, which for this purpose I have called St David's.

Taking all these experiences together, it was possible to formulate a thesis for research that older people are exercising ministries in the church that are vital to its life and mission. Yet instead of celebrating their gifts and ministries it seemed often the church took them for granted. Anecdotally many expressed themselves neglected, overlooked and invisible. At the same time the attention of the church was being directed towards the perceived problem of an ageing population that also was reflected in its congregations. At best these demographic changes might be regarded as a problem to be solved by

strategies of pastoral care and at worst they were regarded as a symptom of a dying church. Therefore, although issues of good practice in collaborative ministry remained a concern of the research, the focus shifted to finding ways to deepen understanding of the ministries exercised by older people within such patterns of ministry. This was relevant not just to my own practice of ministry but to ministry of any church seeking fulfil its mission in a contemporary social context in which issues of ageing were perceived as a challenge or even threat. But there was also an emotional investment in that I had grown into a passionate concern for the ministries exercised by older people. I considered such caring was sufficient motivation for research and might even be described as a vocation in ministry (Tribble, 2011). Further it might be a means through which "persons and congregations might be transformed themselves and thus foster transformation as instruments of God's mission in the world" (Tribble 2011, ch. 5).

Although there has been a growing body of research into ministry with older people in the last two decades, it has tended to focus on how the church can meet the spiritual and practical needs of older people in their midst (see for example: Knox 2002; Jewell, 2004; MacKinlay, 2006; Collyer, et al. 2008; Morse and Hitchings, 2008; Woodward, 2008; Hawley and Jewell, 2009; Swinton and Payne, 2009). In much the same way as Graham (2002) cites studies that have identified the failure of pastoral theology to recognise the distinct experiences of women as receivers and as active agents of care, there has been limited attention paid to understanding the ministries older people do exercise and their experiences of exercising them. These areas of research into theology and practice of pastoral care among older people are vital, but they tend to focus on older people as recipients rather than agents of ministry. There is a balance to be struck by recognising the resources older people have to offer and the active contributions they are making to the life and ministry of the church.

I had enough evidence that this could be a fruitful and informative piece of work and contextual opportunities to conduct research, through a survey for example, which could describe the ministries older people are exercising. But it needed to be more than a description of what there is if it were to have any capacity for transformation in understanding or attitude. If as it seemed ministries exercised by older people are somehow being constrained, often unrecognised or unacknowledged it was important to understand why that might be and how we might better use the resources older people bring to the church as contributors to the spiritual nurturing of the whole community. The need to encourage and draw on the resources older people have for ministry is something

the Church of England has begun to acknowledge in growing attention to lifelong learning and discipleship (Board of Education, 2012).

One of the issues that might affect how older people are seen and used is ageism, a form of discrimination which operates at personal, cultural and social levels (Bytheway, 1995; Thompson, 2006; Thompson, 2011). The possibility that ageism is operating within the church as much as in wider society needs to be considered, even though the idea of discrimination is a difficult one for the church to grapple with. Paradoxically when there is so much attention focused on meeting the needs of older people and the challenges of an ageing population, ageism can serve to disempower and render them invisible and to silence their voices. By choosing to incorporate an examination of ageism with a wider concern for collaborative ministry it would be necessary to consider issues of power and how it is ascribed, maintained and exercised.

There are now several writers who have explored the theology and practice of collaborative ministry (Whitehead and Whitehead, 1991; Robertson, 2007; Nash, Pimlott and Nash, 2008; Pickard, 2009; Heywood, 2011; Tomlin, 2014) and all in different ways raise the importance of understanding power as a dynamic of human relationships (Pickard, 2009) as well as in organisational structures and leadership patterns (Robertson, 2007; Heywood, 2011). Pickard for example argues a collaborative approach in ministry will always require both sharing and bestowal of power and highlights structures of society as well as norms and expectations of leadership to suggest "(t)he prevailing cultural values have a far greater impact on our religious life and forms of ministry than most of us realise or care to know" (Pickard 2009, p.3). Further, Heywood suggests that in practice the way ministry is worked out in the Church of England means there are inherent power differences, so lay ministry still is regraded as auxiliary to stipendiary clergy and 'full time professional ministry' is what is seen as 'real' (Heywood, 2011).

However, despite this attention to power and by implication discrimination, there is little attention given by these authors to how this might operate in relation to either age or gender. If as Green (2009) suggests women priests are more likely to follow a collaborative approach to ministry the influence of gender in empowering others may be an important factor to look for. Collaborative ministry may have the potential to be generative and inclusive, but it also can be counter-intuitive and affected by our own experiences of power, empowerment and disempowerment (Pickard, 2009, p.2). Therefore the influence of personal stories and histories cannot be ignored. As someone

who is by definition now an 'older person' and as a woman in lay and now non-stipendiary ordained ministry, I have insight into some of the boundaries this creates and have witnessed both empowerment and disempowerment as a result.

All this led to the formation of the intention to research what it is that empowers older people in their ministries in the church. The aim was to deepen understanding to inform my own practice and maybe find channels through which it could be used to empower others and the church to use the resources older people can and do bring to its ministry and mission. The methodology used to achieve this is examined in Chapter 5, but it was crucial that the research could give scope for voices to be heard. As I was by then in a context where there were some distinct activities of ministry exercised by older people, case study methodology was identified as one appropriate methodology. Since my own experience had led into the research and I was part of the context in which it was to take place, there also would be an element of autoethnography alongside that. Both these methodologies have been criticised for lack of rigour, transferability and generalizability. However, it was not intended that the research should produce generalizable findings for policy-making but rather to achieve what Simons suggests is a valid aim, to "present a rich portrayal of a single setting to inform practice, establish the value of the case and / or to add to knowledge of a specific topic" (Simons 2009, p. 124). Autoethnography also has been defended as a legitimate methodology capable of making a substantive contribution to knowledge and understanding (see for example Ellis, 1995; Richardson, 2000; Ellis and Bochner, 2003). The research focus is a contemporary issue for many churches and even while the research was in process opportunities arose use it to raise awareness and inform developments in other churches planning for ministry with and of older people indicating it has value beyond initial expectations.

Developing a Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework provides evidence of coherence to the research and that there is some theory about what is going on, what is happening and why (Robson, 2002, p 63). It "explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied – the key factors, constructs or variables – and the presumed relationships among them" (Miles and Huberman 1994, p 18). Although the importance of having a framework is clear, this has been an evolving process and it took some time to be able to set it out as something approaching a definitive form. This is not unusual in qualitative research as Miles and Huberman (1994) acknowledge, where frameworks may be revised and refined as data is collected and relationships between elements of the research reinterpreted. Frameworks

therefore become a "current version of the researcher's map of the territory being investigated" (Miles and Huberman 1994, p.20), and, similarly, as in this research, in the emerging research focus and question.

The language of conceptual framework can be daunting until it is understood that a range of descriptors and metaphors may be used, some of which may feel more 'right' than others. When discussing different approaches to building conceptual frameworks Leshem and Trafford (2007) identify several metaphors that have been used and group them as architectural, geographic or schematic (Leshem and Trafford, 2007, p.104). Thinking of it as a map made more sense to me, especially as I was using the image metaphor of landscape and concept of journey in writing the research. This freed me to explore different routes which might in time become part of the final chart or map in an evolving process and one in which other concepts were likely to emerge. As Bryman (2012) suggests, while quantitative researchers might adopt a deductive approach, collect data to elucidate theories and concepts and how they might be connected, a qualitative researcher might be more likely to adopt an inductive approach and look for theories and concepts to emerge or be the product of the research (Bryman, 2012, pp. 8-10).

Therefore, as plans for this research developed and the focus shifted or became more refined, the framework map for its implementation also has changed, but individually and collectively contributed understanding of issues in the research. For instance, what was eventually identified as the first conceptual framework was based on the intention to research what good practice in collaborative ministry might look like. It was adapted from a poster describing the research and had a complex set of connections that made it look like an electricity pylon, see Diagram 1 opposite. It might have been lacking in any clear process or expectation of outcome, but it graphically highlighted the significance of power that has been threaded through every stage of development since.
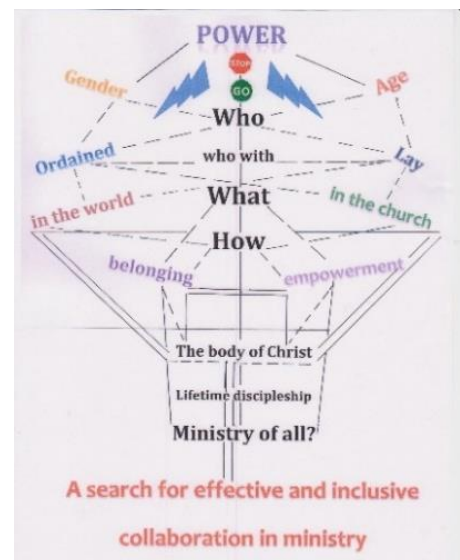
Diagram 1. Conceptual framework focusing on inclusive collaborative ministry

As the intention developed to research what might be good practice in collaborative ministry, the impact and influence of personal experience became more acute. It emerged that very little has been said in this context about gender and age. At the same time I

became more aware of how issues of age had affected my own story. This, coupled with reflection on the experience with the Story-sharing group and listening to the voices of some of the older people among whom I had ministered, meant a shift of focus onto issues of age, ageing and ageism.

At that stage the conceptual framework concentrated on two of the three key concepts, age and empowerment and began to look more like Diagram 2 below:
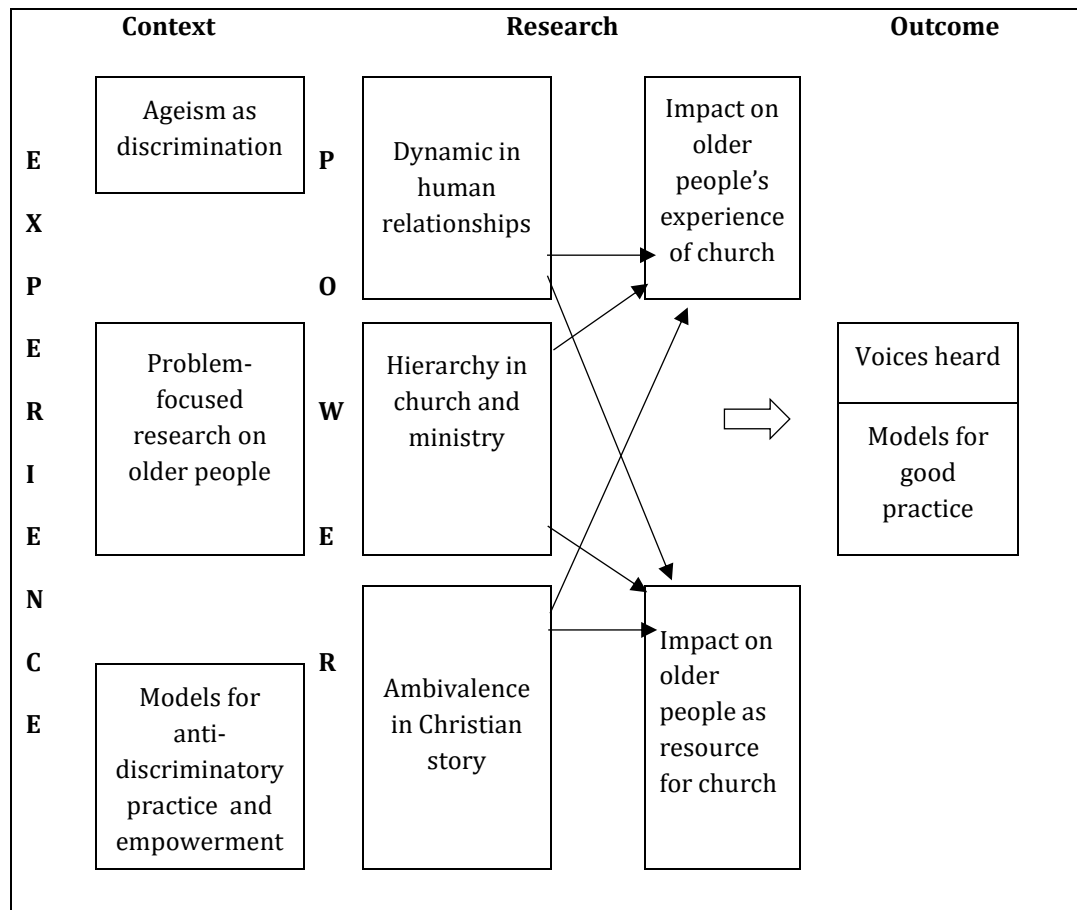
Diagram 2. Conceptual framework focused on ageism

These earlier frameworks helped to highlight areas and stages that needed to be included in some way as the research developed. They also served to emphasise that there is a backstory to this research. This includes academic and practice experience which has shaped and influenced commitment to issues of social justice, anti-discriminatory practice and empowerment and an understanding of research and methods of reflective practice relevant to integration of theological reflection in the process. In addition, the experience of going into church ministry and of work with the Story-sharing Group had wakened an interest and commitment to ministry with and of older people. Therefore in essence the person that I am and the experiences that I carry with me into the research cannot be ignored and have become part of it. They are part of the reason why I notice that there is

something to be researched in the experiences of older people in the church and why I have considered it important enough to invest time and other resources in carrying it out. Therefore any conceptual framework for this research had to incorporate these antecedent or impinging factors (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Once the focus of research had shifted further to the ministries exercised by older people in the church a simpler framework emerged (Diagram 3), and this then developed into one which subsumed some of the earlier frameworks as part of the context. In this framework (Diagram 4), the three key concepts were clearly located and interrelated within the context of the research. The need to ensure the research is underpinned and surrounded by theology and theological reflection is difficult to encapsulate within the framework graphic. There is also no easy way to include links to relevant threads of social sciences which help to understand and explain some of the context. Therefore in Diagram 4 these are shown as threads that underpin the whole diagram, although they are relevant to a greater or lesser extent to different stages and different areas within them.
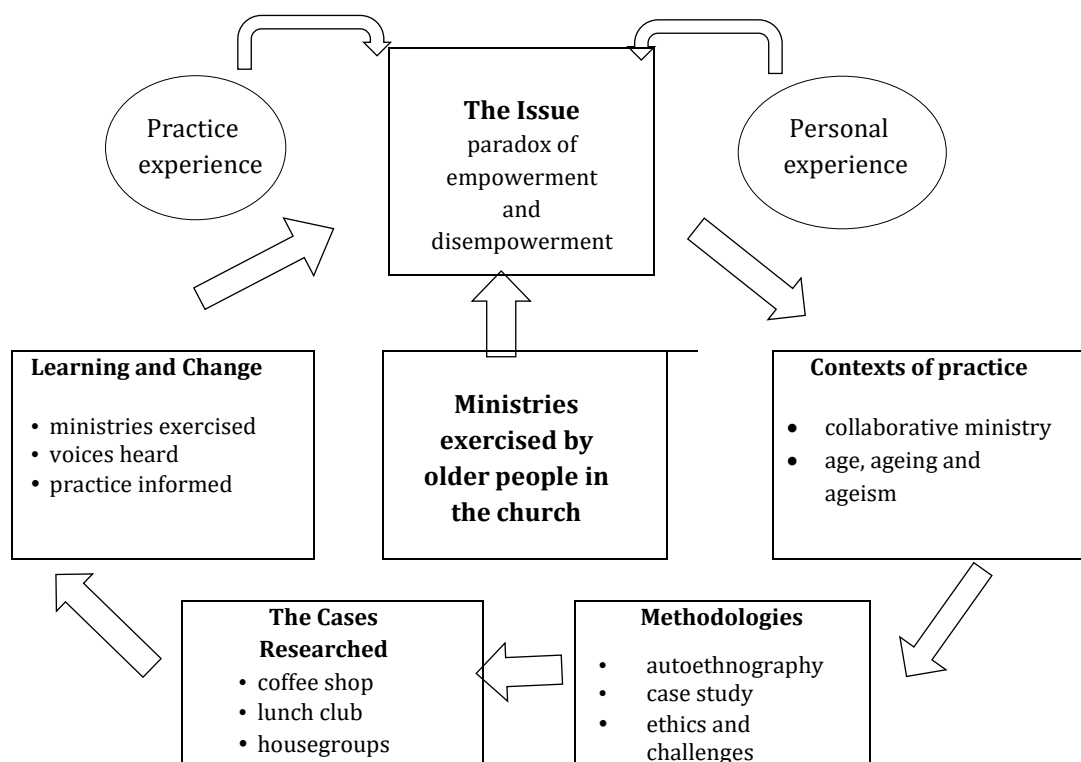
Diagram 3. Conceptual framework focused on ministries that are being exercised by older people

| Antecedents | Context | Informants |

Diagram 4. Combined Conceptual Framework

Antecedents
- Academic and practice experience
- Collaborative Church Ministry
- Pastoral ministry and Story-group

Ministries exercised by older people in the church

Context
- Demographics, age and ageing
- Patterns of Ministry
- Ageism
- Power and Empowerment

Informants
- Personal Story autoethnography
- Ministries of older people

Case Study
- Lunch club
- Coffee shop
- Housegroups
- Worship life

- Voices heard
- Knowledge gained and shared
- Practice informed

Social Science tools: psychology (age/ageing) – sociology – ethnography – demography – power

Theological threads: ministry – pastoral care – story - personhood – equality – justice - power

Diagram 4. Combined Conceptual Framework

Reflection

"My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all day long, though their number is past my knowledge" (Psalm 71:15).

There is a transitional quality in the formation of a conceptual framework for this kind of research. It is developmental in that the questions and research map evolve through reviewing experience and as the focus of enquiry becomes clearer. But it also reflects transitions through time, as past, present and future dimensions become incorporated and connections emerge. Antecedents to this research mostly come from those personal experiences in life, work and ministry that have helped shape my values, knowledge and understanding. The present is found in the exploration of the research context and in the stories that others share as the research takes place, although of course both also have

their own antecedents. The future lies in what the research might achieve in enabling voices to be heard and in building greater understanding that might in some way help inform policy and practice.

As this past, present and future in the conceptual framework emerged, it was possible to see how some of the contributory parts fitted together and how the many and diverse threads might contribute to the research. A little like the Psalmist praising God for what he has done (Psalm 71:15), I could begin to see how God had been at work in those different phases of my life, not only to equip me for the ministry to which he had called me, but also equip and lead me to this new research journey with learning, knowledge and skills that give me confidence that I can undertake this new enquiry. More recently there was the autoethnography of experience in ministry. It was a painful process, as is the nature of autoethnography (Tamas, 2009) but it did bring some measure of healing and helped me locate the joy and affirmation of ministry accomplished through the formation of the Story-sharing Group within that time. Until then I had lost connection with it and it had become an almost buried treasure.

So as I look at what I bring to this research, I can see challenges, gains and losses that come with both stepping in and letting go. These are all part of transitions in life. Transitions can be difficult and sometimes are experienced as times of uncertainty, loss of confidence, or self-doubt (Sugarman, 2001, Whipp, 2013), a process that can be painful and "bewildering for the person who has lost their bearings" (Whipp, 2013, ch.3), connection or sense of belonging. Older people will know a good deal about such transitions. Loss of self-confidence is not necessarily something that comes with age, but it is certainly recognised as something that can affect older people (Hughes and Mtezuka, 1992; Bytheway, 1995; Thompson, 2005). I knew it in my own story as I made that transition into church ministry and associated it with feeling excluded at times and uncertain of my role or place in relationship to others. How often I needed to return to that image rock, the place where I could speak my fears and know God's voice giving reassurance and a sense of identity, confidence and purpose.

There is some comfort in knowing much greater people, such as Abraham and Moses, called by God to step out in ministry, expressed a lack of confidence and each received the promise, "do not be afraid, for I will be with you" (Genesis 15:2; Exodus 3:12). Perhaps it was also part of the experience of the first disciples, although we do not hear of them hesitating or pleading inadequacy. Each had their own background story, knowledge and skill, but each was called away from that to *become* what God wanted to make of them,

"follow me and I will make you…" (Matthew 4:19). What a precious promise to anyone called into ministry - and to me. Theirs was a stepping into shared ministry of learning, growing and transformation and yet, even in such close company with Jesus, they too had moments of loss of confidence and fear, as in the face of a storm (Matthew 8:14-26), or struggling with a task which they must have coped with many times (Matthew 14: 24-27). Then the words 'do not to be afraid' were spoken by Jesus and a promise to go with them as they were commissioned to go into the world (Matthew 28:20). There, surely, was empowerment for ministry.

<center>**Chapter 2**</center>

<center>**Theoretical Perspectives 1: Collaborative Ministry**</center>

> Ministry is a communal activity, and the Risen Christ invites us to learn from him in the fellowship of his church……. Collaborative ministry, after all is not about gimmicks, techniques or strategies but about relationships.
>
> +Colin Coventry, 2007.

This chapter begins the exploration of the theoretical perspectives in this research. There are two merging strands in the landscape in which the research is set: collaborative ministry and age, ageing and older people, and both inform understanding of the issues for empowerment in and of ministry. Contextual issues of age and ageing and the experiences of older people in ministry are explored in Chapter 3. The issue of empowerment is examined in Chapter 4. The focus in this chapter is collaborative ministry, how it is defined and what factors research tells us need to be considered in order to understand its organisation and practice.

Contextual introduction

The practice context out of which the intention to research developed raised questions about the principles of collaborative ministry and particularly what good practice in collaborative ministry might look like. This was through direct experience of ministry as a member of a Mission and Ministry Team (MMT) in the Church of England. The formation of the team was as an independent parish initiative of a church who for this purpose I have called All Saints. It was said to have been founded on collaborative principles and in its development referred to the concept of relational ministry. At the time there were three members of the team, the ordained parish incumbent, and two lay ministers: me as pastoral minister, employed full time and a part time employed youth minister. I was the only woman in the team, and the oldest, but only by four or five years. Its theological basis lay in an understanding of ministry as the vocation of all who are baptised, within an expressed commitment of the team members to enable and empower all-member ministry.

There was little to distinguish this team from other developments of Local Ministry Teams in that Diocese, or elsewhere in England, where lay and ordained are commissioned to work together, except that it was not formally so authorised by the Bishop. In addition,

there were employment contracts for the two of us in lay ministry with associated role descriptions and objectives. In that sense it had elements borrowed from models of management in a secular business context. However, there was also an emphasis on covenant relationships between members of the team and between the team and the church, which added a theological dimension and reflected its evangelical theology and ecclesiology. Although not explicitly articulated at the time, its theology seemed to draw on a form of covenant theology in which ministry flows from the New Covenant established by the death and resurrection of Jesus, who calls and equips all who are baptised into the one body to work together (Robertson, 2007). Later, as the team became established, there were some conversations about relationships in the team being shaped by trinitarian principles, but, as I recall, their application to our context and experience was not developed.

The incumbent retained the authority and responsibility of his role within the organisational and accountability structures of the Church of England, but regarded himself both as an equal team colleague and as the team manager, a conflicting ideal that perhaps not surprisingly proved difficult to translate into practice. Although we sought to embrace and live by the collaborative principles implicit in the covenant relationships of the initiative, the experience was a difficult one and in practice there were limitations of roles and dissonance between the intention and practice of equality in our relationships (Goatly, 2010). In time I formed the view this was both because of what I understood to be the hierarchical structures of the Church of England of which we were a part and because of the challenges and dynamics of power which are inherent within those structures and in human relationships. These dynamics and other issues associated with power and authority manifested both in experience of the team and in confusion in understanding and expectations of relationships with the wider congregation and with other churches and ministers with whom we worked (Goatly 2010). All of this raised questions about what good practice in collaborative ministry might look like as I left that ministry in order to train for the ordained ministry.

Defining collaborative ministry.

Collaborative ministry is said to draw on the theology of ministry as the vocation of the whole people of God (Greenwood, 1994; Greenwood, 2002; Robertson, 2007; Pickard, 2009; Heywood, 2011). It has been described as a natural way of ministering as disciples in the body of Christ (Pickard, 2009, p.1). However, there is an organisational dimension in that, even though their gifts will differ, people will be working together for one of the

two tasks of the church, 'going out' and 'building up', but always for the benefit of the whole (Robertson, 2007). In that sense, there are also biblical foundations to the concept in the story of the early church, for example as found in sharing together in teaching, prayer, worship and pastoral care (Acts 2:42-47) and in some of the letters to the churches concerning the gifts for ministry and interdependence one with another (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 1 Corinthians 12: 12-31; Romans 12: 6-21), and the use of gifts and leadership for building up of the whole church (Ephesians 4:11-13).

The concept of collaborative ministry has been described as 'slippery' with a "variety of possible models and no consensus as to what exactly it should look like" (Heywood, 2011, p.183). Nevertheless, it is a phrase that has become increasingly used to describe patterns of ministry over the last 20-30 years and some argue it has been an influence in the church for several decades previously (Robertson, 2007). It can be applied to ways of working in various denominations and in social care settings, but there will be differences in theology, organisation and values that inform its practice that mean it will be understood differently in each context (Nash, Pimlott and Nash, 2008). Within the Church of England it has been referred to as a 'received phrase' that has some acknowledged negative connotations in other contexts but should be understood in terms of the root meaning of working together and extended to mean not only doing but being in true partnership (Board of Mission, 1995, p.2).

The currency of the concept within the Church of England has grown to the extent that it has been described as a 'buzz word' (Robertson, 2007). As noted earlier, commitment to collaboration is a criterion for selection to train for authorised ministry, although in that context collaborative ministry is referred to as one of a number of forms of shared ministry (Church of England 2015c). However, here it may be important to distinguish collaborative ministry and collaboration *in* ministry. Collaboration *in* ministry may take place in different ways and at different levels, between and within churches. It may involve sharing in leadership of projects and activities, as for example in shared or in ecumenical developments of mission and requires a commitment to collaboration and its relevant skills. It is not a description of a pattern of ministry. Shared ministry, achieved through collaboration, on the other hand is one way of describing a pattern of ministry and this seems to have been the preferred term for some time in the Church of England. As long ago as 1983, a comprehensive report on ministry, spoke of it being a

> "fundamental weakness in the life of the church ... that.... so many laity continue to regard themselves as a sort of clerical support system. The function of the laity as

the Body of Christ is neither to be excluded from the sanctuary nor to take over the role of the clergy. It is to serve God *both* in liturgy *and* in the world". (Tiller, 1983. Para. 119, p68 *original emphasis*).

This it declared required a collaborative style, with Christ as the shared source of ministry and shared tasks exercised through different gifts and roles. The report supported a radical revisioning of ministry of all Christians in local teams of ordained and lay people, but its structural vision for changes in the parish system and implications for stipendiary priests, patronage and freehold were among the issues that meant it met with serious concern (Kuhrt, 2001, pp.57-8).

Other discussions in the Church of England recognised the many contexts in which a life-time of calling to ministries takes place, in family, work and leisure and in what it called "our church ministries" it noted:

"the work of both clergy and laity in worship and in witness, in parish activities, in stewardship and evangelism. It is very important for the Church to affirm and honour the work of church-wardens, readers, Sunday School teachers, parish workers, Church Army Officers and those who cook, type and clean" (Board of Education, 1985, p.4).

But it also acknowledged the tensions in relationships between clergy and laity and concluded there was a problem of persistent clericalism in the Church of England, and in its final conclusions restated the "*primary location of the laity is in society at large* (and) most laity are only secondarily located in the institutional Church" (Board of Education, 1985, p.67 *original emphasis*).

It is this issue of organisational and relationship structures that has become the focus for those who advocate an understanding of collaborative ministry as a distinctive pattern of ministry. It can be argued that each of the terms associated with ministry noted above has particular meaning that can be distinguished one from the other and also from collaborative ministry. In 'shared ministry', for example, the minister tends to share or allocate tasks but not role with others, so members of the congregations may be doing things and participating in ministry, but always under the direction and authority of the minister (Robertson, 2007). Conversely collaborative ministry involves sharing of role in such a way that the whole church shares in the ministerial role according to spiritual gifting of each (Robertson, 2007, p.69). Similarly, a ministry which might be called 'enabling ministry', is one in which the minister retains authority over the church, but enables its members to participate in certain activities of ministry. Here again, it is the

issue of control and management and the locus of decisions about who exercises which ministry that distinguish this from true collaborative ministry (Robertson, 2007, p.102). The concept of 'every member ministry' might appear to come closer to this understanding of collaborative ministry, but that also may be distinguished for its focus on skill rather than gifting and for tending to operate within a pyramid leadership structure (explored in more detail in the next section) which tends to "knock the lowly into a 'fit only to follow' category" (Robertson, 2007, p.115),

It is also argued that the concept of 'priesthood of all believers' as found in the letters to the early church (Hebrews 2, 8 and 9; 1 Peter 2:5-9) has a place in the development of collaborative ministry, but this needs to be understood in terms of how its roles and relationships functioned. If it is read as a mandate to the whole church as ministers in service to the world (Astley, 2010, p. 80) it clearly implies a working together and a form of collaborative ministry. However, as the early church grew, some were also given special ministries of leadership. Their role was to equip all Christians for their works of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12). Robertson locates this in a theology of Pentecost, in which Jesus remained the High Priest and Christians shared in the priestly task through the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore he argues it is irrelevant that different churches and denominations call it ordaining, commissioning or appointing leaders, or whether leadership is called priesthood or ministry, since ministry "in the New Testament sense (remains) the corporate task of the whole church'" (Robertson 2007, p.82). He further argues that the commission to go into the world, was to be in partnership with Jesus who remained their Lord, through the person of the Holy Spirit. This understanding of collaborative ministry places at its heart relationships between those who minister and Jesus, but emphasises that it is in partnership with God in his mission (+Colin Coventry, 2007; Robertson 2007).

There are both ideological and practical influences operating in the development and application of the concept of collaborative ministry. The attention given to it in in the context of the Church of England could be said to be influenced most clearly by pragmatic issues. Changes in the structures and staffing of parishes has meant that increasingly clergy have found themselves responsible for more than one parish and of necessity working alongside lay and authorised ministers. In some Dioceses these have resulted in the commissioning of Lay Ministry Teams, or Locally Ordained Ministers, all working alongside the parish priest. However, while this may have made collaborative ways of working, essential, it is not clear this is collaborative ministry in the way Robertson

(2007) and others describe it. It may have raised expectations of new ways of sharing in decision-making, but the implication is that the priest remains central and laity are "drawn in to share in that centrality" (Richards 1995, p.18).

Parallel developments in the theology of mission as the mission of the whole body of the church arguably resulted in a shift away from a preoccupation with the structures of the church and its governance to a different emphasis on sharing in mission. Some of this was driven by evidence of declining church attendance in the 1990s and a renewal of emphasis on evangelism. One author saw the resultant shift as moving away from "clericalisation of the lay ministry, in which ministry of the laity is seen as an adjunct to that of the clergy, to the need to discern how the ordained serves the mission and ministry of the whole church" which is not confined within church walls (Heywood, 2011, p.13). Therefore, the church has to recognise the wide range of vocations among its members and must seek to equip them to carry them out in their daily lives (Heywood, 2011) as an outworking of discipleship both within the church and work (Pickard 2009).

Leadership in collaborative ministry

Notwithstanding the attention that has been given to the importance of the church looking outside itself in fulfilling its call to mission, much of what is written about collaborative ministry has focused on the internal organisation of ministry in the church and particularly issues of leadership. Leadership and leadership styles have been recognised by some authors as key to understanding what good practice in collaborative ministry might look like. Some focus on this as a management issue drawing on experiences in business or professional organisation and argue that there is a gap in clergy training to equip them for such roles (Belben, 2006, Cranwell, 2014). Belben suggests that the incumbent clergy responsibility for the cure of souls need not mean they also carry responsibility for team leadership. He even suggests that leadership in collaborative ministry "should probably be part-time, and (if priesthood is considered necessary) might even be (daring thought) a non-stipendiary priest" (Belben, 2006 *original parentheses*).

Robertson (2007) has given particular attention to the role of ministers in leadership and the structures of the church within which they exercise it. He helpfully considers this, from both historical and biblical perspectives, in terms of the traditional place of pyramid leadership in church organisations, with one person at the top. Although in recent years there has been greater attention given to the concept of servant leadership, which might appear to move away from this, he argues that is simply an inverted pyramid model that still depends on one person and is inherently vulnerable and unstable. Therefore, "(t)he

terminology may be about service, but the reality is (the pastor is) firmly 'in charge'" Robertson, 2007, p.38). He similarly deals with those who talk of new models of 'Jesus style' ministry by suggesting it only works if Jesus remains the centre and the church leader is in a disciple role along with others. Ultimately he argues that to call any form of ministry collaborative when it has an organisational structure that uses the concept of level is to misunderstand the nature of collaborative ministry entirely, since " there are no 'levels' in CM, only 'areas of ministry' and these are not defined by either size or visibility. Leadership is distributed across the church, ministry is a response to the call of God and the driving force behind the entire structure is the Holy Spirit" (Robertson, 2007, p.44 *original abbreviation*).

Drawing on this analysis, collaborative ministry requires a radical shift from a traditional pyramid leadership to new understanding of shared working that is not hierarchical. Therefore, delegation by itself will not lead to collaborative ministry since that is characterised by hierarchical lines of communication and centralised responsibility. Rather collaborative ministry requires a structure that emphasises partnership and shared responsibility among those responsible for different areas of ministry. Relationships between leaders of these different ministries will differ according to the nature of their areas of ministry. It may be that there will be both giving and receiving ministry, direct involvement and no involvement at all in some areas, but all who are leaders, including the minister, corporately "submit to the leadership and authority of Jesus Christ, as a member of the whole church along with everyone else" (Robertson, 2007, p.53).

Further, this understanding of collaborative ministry places emphasis on gifting which might imply limited attention need be given to developing skills for leadership or participation. Equally, and significantly for this research, it is suggested that if it is accepted that collaborative ministry relies on the gifting of all, it does not mean qualification for leadership itself need be defined by levels of skill or education and "leaders might be elderly or very young – people who, in pyramidical churches, would be regarded as those needing ministry" (Robertson, 2007, p.125). However, there is a range of skills that may be considered vital to successful collaboration, such as skills in managing group processes, facilitation, conflict resolution, teamwork and supervision, all of which benefit from developing knowledge, understanding and skills in their application (Nash, Pimlott and Nash, 2008). Good communication skills also would seem to be essential and one American study of 130 churches in the United Presbyterian Church (Smith, 1979),

although a little dated now, found it was important that pastors had not just a high commitment to shared ministry but could articulate and communicate a theology of ministry and conviction that ministry belongs to all the people.

Smith's study also found that qualities of self-awareness and an ability consciously to structure relationships within the organisation to avoid tendencies to dominate groups were important among its ordained leaders. Therefore, "truly shared ministry requires a high level of personal security not to be threatened by strong lay leaders, to be willing to give up need for control, and to be willing not to be involved in everything that goes on in the congregation" (Smith 1979, pp.344-5). Robertson would agree with this: put more starkly, collaborative ministry, he says, requires strong leaders who can allow others to take real responsibility and "keep his hands off even when he knows he could do a better (and quicker) job" (Robertson, 2007, p.143 *original parenthesis*). Further, this can be accomplished through enabling others rather than personally fulfilling certain tasks, even within a Church of England structure in which the minister priest is appointed and given responsibility for the pastoral care of the parish (Robertson, 2007, p.161).

Pickard sees similar issues in the practice of collaborative ministry but in focusing on the dynamics of power within human relationships as well as the structures within which they operate, argues that collaborative ministry requires both sharing and bestowal of power that is counterintuitive and is more often than not resisted for fear of personal diminution (Pickard, 2009, p.2). Arguably therefore, the practice of collaborative ministry depends on having leaders who are sufficiently comfortable with power that can be genuinely shared and are able to embrace different perspectives, so that those working with them are able to feel "less hemmed in by regulations and more responsible for their own contributions to the common effort" (Whitehead and Whitehead, 1991, p.125).

Issues of power in collaborative ministry
Power exists within human relationships and is inherent in structures and cultures within which we live and work. Therefore, it is inescapable that issues of power affect the life and work of the church. They are relevant both to its organisation and leadership and its ministry. However, there is an ambivalence about notions of power in the church (Percy, 1998; Kearsley, 2008). Power that is spoken of in relation to worship, such as the 'power of the Spirit moving', or in someone thought of as a powerful preacher generally might be considered positive and something to be welcomed. Power as a dynamic in human relationships is less comfortably acknowledged especially when it can be seen and experienced negatively or prejudicially to abuse, marginalise or exclude. Despite the

image of the church as the Body of Christ, in which each is encouraged to think of themselves as part of a whole without discrimination in value and with mutual care (1 Corinthians 12), cultural expectations among congregations may still vest value and power in individuals and hierarchies (Jamieson, 1997, p.12). All this has implications for collaborative ministry and if it is accepted that a Western cultural context prizes competition, it will have a "far greater impact on our religious life and forms of ministry than most of us realise or care to know" (Pickard 2009, p.3).

In drawing attention to such dynamics of power Pickard (2009) raises personal as well as organisational challenges to the practice of collaborative ministry that are relevant both to those in positions of authority or responsibility and for those who are exercising ministry in some kind of partnership with them. He suggests that power and the use of power is something we learn as part of human growth and development and "those who for various reasons grow up without a sense of empowerment or acquire it in dysfunctional and unhealthy ways can easily misuse it" (Pickard 2009, p.1). In their discussion of partnerships for collaborative ministry, Whitehead and Whitehead (1991) provide a helpful analysis of how we experience different levels of power in various stages towards adult maturity. They draw heavily on the work of McClelland, who identified four ways we experience power: receptivity to power in early life, self-reliance and sufficiency as we develop autonomy, experiences of expressing power as we discover our influence on others and, in maturity, being able to feel strong in power shared (Whitehead and Whitehead, 1991, pp.116-125). They suggest those who cling to early life expressions of power may find it difficult to engage at more mature levels which involve power sharing. This will be especially where those early experiences have been inhibiting, lacking in trust or security. Therefore, they argue "leaders whose primary experience of power comes in assertion and control may find partnership difficult", to the extent that "they may go through the motions of mutuality, but only at a real personal cost: acting collaboratively will diminish their confidence and erode their sense of effectiveness" (Whitehead and Whitehead, 1991, p.124).

In the organisational context the issue may be framed in terms of power associated with responsibility and authority. Robertson draws a distinction between authority where it is understood as the power or ability to have the 'last word', and responsibility as it operates in collaborative ministry. For collaborative ministry to work he would argue the minister needs to be confident and able to share authority and give away responsibilities, in such a way that responsibility remains and rests with the whole church (Robertson, 2007,

pp.173-4). This may present its own challenges to the leader's sense of value and status in the organisation. Greenwood also identified such stresses when considering the developments in patterns of ministry from the 1980s and its growing emphasis on the collaborative nature of church. While it may have gained pragmatic and intellectual support, he suggests it was beset by emotional tensions.

> "(Some clergy) have gladly given assent with their heads to the vital role of laity in the church, yet are held back emotionally from sharing the power which inherited patterns left in their hands (and) (some laity) feel rejected because despite constant reference to collaborative ministry as an idea, the patterns of their church's life, still do not give them 'permission' to be treated as one of equal value to the clergy" (Greenwood, 2002, p2).

It is possible these kinds of challenges and issues of power in relationships can be addressed by adopting a trinitarian theology as the basis for collaborative ministry. It can be argued that there is within the Trinity the "original of all collaborative ministry" (Heywood, n.d.) which demonstrates a mutuality in relationships that provides a model for ministers working together. In the Trinity there is "mutual equality, but also distinction of identity and diversity of function" (Greenwood, 2002, p. 111), Therefore the issue of hierarchy becomes redundant since the relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is based on interdependence and a quality of open, sharing relationships (Mott, 1995; Greenwood, 2002). Pickard however, argues that while such trinitarian understanding may support many kinds of 'cooperative forms of ministry', problems still remain "trapped in patterns of meaning that tend to shore up pre-existing positions" (Pickard, 2009, p.125). He insists these challenges are clearly evident in the unresolved issues of the relationship between the ministries of those who are ordained and the wider body of the church.

One aspect of power that is less well explored by any of those who have written about collaborative ministry is that which relates to issues of diversity other than in terms of diversity in gifts to contribute to the whole. By focusing on gifts or gifting, ministries will vary and therefore arguably collaborative ministry "enables, encourages and rejoices in diversity" (Robertson, 2007, p.113). However, consideration of those aspects of diversity such as gender and age, which are directly relevant to this research are much less evident. Pickard for example does not consider issues of gender in ministry except in referring to relational ontology of orders within churches where he suggests a "full relational ontology of orders may actually require both women and men to share in orders" (Pickard, 2009, p163). Similarly he makes few, if any references to older people in ministry. Heywood

(2011) also offers little specifically to identify and address issues of gender in ministry, except to note that Jesus' ministry broke through the sharp differentiation of race, gender and religious practice. Nor does he make any reference to older people in his new model of church and ministry. Perhaps given his strong emphasis on the ministry of all, he did not see it necessary to single out any group in his analysis. However, that fails to take account of power and the dynamics of exclusion and inclusion. There is further discussion of this issue in Appendix 1.

Additionally, although research into collaborative ministry has emphasised the theology of ministry of the baptised, it has tended to focus on the implications for pastors and leaders. Little if anything has been written about the experience of congregations, whether they are working together in ministries or among those who are explicitly identified as engaged in ministry alongside the ordained. Smith's study in the United Presbyterian Church highlighted the importance of encouraging and affirming ministry within congregations as one way of empowering their capacity also to be ministers in the world (Smith 1979). His definition of ministry was broad and included ministries inside and outside the church through caring for those in crisis or need, ministries of justice and reconciliation, in business decision-making, community leadership and engagement with community issues, and ministries of witness and dialogue through sharing the gospel and faith. However it raises an important point of attending to the responses and experiences of those who are not among the ordained or otherwise authorised leadership, but who nevertheless exercise ministry. That too is directly relevant to this research.

Reflection

As I learned more, it was not clear to me that collaborative ministry is attainable, in the sense that people like Robertson propose, and yet I continue to hope that it exists. This 'slippery concept' is riddled with issues of power and diversity. I assumed my first experience in ministry was collaborative ministry because that word was used in its development and commissioning. The language Robertson uses resonates with much of the language of the development of the MMT and his analysis is attractive for that reason. No doubt the intention was there, but the structures within which we ministered and limited attention given to the dynamics of power, worked against us. Certainly, I always felt any authority or responsibility I had for the ministry I exercised was contingent and limited.

This raises some challenging issues about how leadership is exercised. If, by arguing as Robertson (2007) does, that in collaborative ministry all of those who minister together,

including the leaders, are equal, there is potential for directionless chaos. Someone needs to be recognised as leader. In ministering with the disciples, Jesus clearly remained the leader and was respected, even revered, for that, although his emphasis was on being a servant. And despite his collaborative modelling, the disciples were not immune from squabbling about who was the greater or more important among them (Luke 9:46-48). So much seems to rest on those personal qualities of those in leadership roles and especially how they accept and manage the power they have as leaders. The insights Whtehead and Whitehead (1991) bring through their use of the analysis of McClelland highlights the importance of how we embrace and mature in our use of power. Knowing something of the background of each of us in the MMT, it helps make sense of some of the experiences. But thinking about some of the other work relationships I have had, both inside and outside the church, it leads me to reflect that perhaps we all carry wounds of experiences of power, that affect not just how we exercise it but also how we perceive it in others. That must have implications for the kinds of relationships needed for genuinely collaborative ministry, and for empowerment.

Pickard's view of the challenges that arise and remain in a church context are persuasive. I label the structures hierarchical, but Greenwood (1994) helpfully talks of them as 'inherited patterns'. Although Greenwood traces changes that have made collaborative ministry more possible, he also notes "we still largely believe in, as well as feel free to criticize and scapegoat, clerical hierarchy – with a few keen lay helpers and supporters" (Greenwood, 2002, p.146). So maybe it is too easy to lay all the blame there and not consider the expectations and assumptions of congregations that could be described as 'inherited expectations' of ministry, which assume hierarchy. Some people may come with experiences of an ecclesial tradition that lead them to expect to be involved in ministry and carry a measure of responsibility and authority. Others who understand the role of priest as the one who is called to be their leader, expect them to fulfil that calling by doing everything.

There are issues on both sides. Clergy must recognise and understand the impact of their behaviour and attitudes, which can empower or disempower, as well as to have the insight and personal confidence to work collaboratively. But laity also must let go of reticence, or assumption that ministry is only for specially selected people called minister or priest. It is hard for me to acknowledge but I know I have the capacity to feel diminished and undermined by labels and hierarchy but also empowered by them. I have enjoyed a sense of what I call place, but is probably better called status, when I am part of it. Therefore, I must be prepared to acknowledge how I function within organisational

structures can either empower or disempower others. Working collaboratively may not be easy, but collaborative ministry has challenges of a different order. It challenges issues of status, personal prestige or desire to be in control. It demands unconditional trust in the other to fulfil their part.

The image of the Good Samaritan used by Reit Bons–Storm (1996) sums it up: There was the one who noticed the wounds, took the victim to the inn, paid for his care and then went on his way. "When in this way pastoral care is an act of co-operation of compassion, it is possible to see it as liberating and more open the voices of the marginalised, diverse but equal and empower them to realise their potential and use their talents" (Reit Bons – Storm 1996, p.29). Here is something to reflect on not just for pastoral care but also for collaborative ministry and especially where it involves people who might see themselves as marginalised, inferior or no longer wanted. Here there is a link to the other strand of enquiry concerning older people in the ministries they exercise.

If collaborative ministry can be defined as, 'ministries exercised by people, lay or ordained, working together in a purposeful way that is mutually supportive, enabling or empowering', it does not remove the challenges, but it does affirm its existence. The fact that some will carry responsibilities of leadership, need not undermine it, but discrimination, exclusion and negative exercise of power will. It is not necessary for every form of ministry within the church to include an ordained member working with lay people. However, for it to be empowered and empowering, there must be some connectedness between the ministries, so all understand their place and relevance as part of the ministry of the whole. As Whipp argues, the "most basic organic priority is for the Church to be an open and inclusive community", but there is a deeper call to be a community that "thinks creatively about how the distinctive vocation of each person can be fostered as a source of mutual enrichment and delight" (Whipp, 2013, ch.6). Perhaps here is the heart of good practice in collaborative ministry - and empowerment.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Perspectives 2: Issues of Age and Ageing

"Upon you I have leaned from my birth; it was you who took me from my mother's womb".
 "Do not cast me off in the time of old age, do not forsake me when my strength is spent"
                                                                      Psalm 71:6,9.

In this chapter the second strand in the contextual landscape of the research is explored. The focus is on the contemporary social context of an ageing population and personal and cultural experiences associated with age. It also examines how age and ageing affect the experiences of people in the church and the ministries exercised by older people. This is aspect of enquiry is further examined in Appendix 2.

Contextual introduction

My entry into church ministry at the age of 52 was into a lay ministry post as part of the Ministry and Mission Team (MMT) at All Saints. The five years spent in that post took me over a threshold in my Diocese that precluded training for stipendiary ordained ministry. I remained eligible to be considered for ordination into non-stipendiary ministry, now called self-supporting ministry, but had subsequent decisions been in place it would have taken me over the threshold to be considered for ordination at all. Many non-stipendiary ministers will be in secular employment, choosing to offer a portion of their time to the church, or in circumstances which enable them to support themselves without stipend, while offering time in ministry in the church. This pathway was a hard choice for me, partly because it fell short of what I had understood was a calling to full time parish ministry, but also because my circumstances were not conducive to a self-supporting status. Ultimately it would require me to sell my home. Age had been one factor that directly affected my entry into ministry and the roles to which I could be appointed.

The age profile of clergy and authorised ministers in the Diocese in which I worked had been identified as a matter of concern and a strategy was being developed to "increase the number of years of service from our investment in training, to strengthen the spectrum of role models we present in the ministry of the church, and to deepen the pool of ministry experience and wisdom through long serving clergy" (Diocese of St Albans, 2012, para.4.1.5). The rationale behind the strategy was objectively presented, but its impact was what some of us as ministers experienced as discriminatory.

Ageism, is now well documented, but was only just emerging in the academic research agenda in the 1990s when I was teaching anti-discriminatory practice. Neither was it then the subject of Equality Legislation. However, by the time I entered pastoral ministry in the MMT at All Saints, it was a recognised social issue and UK legislation concerning discrimination on the grounds of age was about to be implemented. Appendix 2 examines how ageism operates and highlights experiences of older people in the church. Issues of ageism can disempower from participation in ministry.

My experiences as a pastoral minister enabled me to develop ministry among and with older people, that I did not expect, but I came to embrace with passion and commitment. As I worked with and among many older people and listened to their stories, I learned more from their experiences about ageism. It was uncomfortable, if not surprising, to see ageism being played out in the church. Experiences of being, or feeling marginalised in the church might stem from feeling regarded as a problem, or no longer having value in a community that emphasises a need to focus on its younger people for the future. It was especially an issue for those who once played significant roles in the church, and perhaps also in secular employment. When people are no longer contributors in that way, it is easy for them to feel a burden and to experience a sense of loss of value or purpose in ministry. At the same time it was possible to point to examples of ministries of older people that were a vital part of the life and mission of the church in every church context in which I went on to minister. The older people themselves may not always label what they do as ministry and many would come from a background and culture of regarding ministry as synonymous with ordination, but it is ministry nonetheless.

The demographic context of ageing

That the UK population is ageing has been known for many years (Slater 1995; Warnes, 1996). A comparison of UK census 1981 and 1991, showed an 8% increase in residents over the age of 60. However, this was due almost entirely to increase in those over 75, and especially those over 85. Since then a generation has grown into this category with the post war 'baby boomers' reaching 60. A report to the House of Lords in 2013 confirmed the UK population "is ageing rapidly" and it is projected that there will be 51% more people aged 65 and 101% more people aged 85 over in England in 2030 compared to 2010 (House of Lords, 2013, p.7).

These demographic changes were attributed to the combination of increased life expectancy and changes in the birth rate in the UK, including the post war 'baby boom'

(House of Lords 2013, p.19). There are wide ranging implications of these demographic changes. One study in America where there are similar changes, (Hanson, 2009), the need to take seriously characteristics of these emerging groups of older people was highlighted. Those aged 50-70, who are sometimes described as the 'new old' or 'young old'. Among the characteristics of these groups is a desire to keep working beyond retirement, to remain active and involved and have a reluctance to participate in things which might identify them with ageing. This leads her to argue that

> "this new generation of older adults is beginning to blur the lines of (a) linear approach to life. A more appropriate approach is to take a cyclical view, which recognises 'boomers' may retire, travel, enjoy leisure activities, go back to college and even pursue a different career, as "work, education and leisure are woven in and out of the life course" (Hanson, 2009, p.78).

Although the House of Lords Report was focused particularly on economic and health implications, it also recognised "Britons do not see themselves as elderly until they are approaching 70 and many in their 70s and beyond continue to be active and engaged in society" (House of Lords, 2013, p.26). Other studies in the UK have made similar observations (Collyer et al. 2008; Morisy, 2011; Board of Education, 2012). This changing demographic means that the 'new old' are treading new territory and understanding of what becoming older means (Morisy, 2011) and judgements and expectations about ageing based on a model of three stages of life are suddenly out of date. It leaves the present generation of people entering older age disorientated and needing to find new ways to use this gift of extra years (Chittister, 2008; Morisy, 2011). Moreover, many will have had little meaningful experience of church and so new ways of building connections are going to be needed (Collyer et al. 2008, p.5).

An important feature of these demographic changes is the changing heterogeneity of this older population. Therefore, it is "not always helpful, or correct to consider older people as a homogeneous group defined by chronological age" (House of Lords 2013, p. 28), Another report had found indications that women, people living alone due to death of spouse or divorce and people from minority ethnic groups will form an increasing proportion of the older population. In addition, changes in provision for care in the community means fewer will be living in residential care and more will be living independently or in supported accommodation (Board of Social Responsibility, 1990, p.15). Issues which arise from these changes in population demography have placed older people high on the social and political agenda, but often in negative terms. Much of this has to do with economic issues, such as the escalating cost of care for the increasing

proportion of older people in the population places demands on already stretched resources for social and health care (Jowit, 2013; House of Lords, 2013).

Understanding age and ageing

Ageing is an embodied process. A biological approach to understanding older age, including the influence of genetics, can assist in understanding physical development and physical changes such as reduced stamina, slowness, mobility problems and impairment or loss of senses such as hearing or sight. Although an understanding of these physical and intellectual changes is important to appreciating some of the challenges in old age, they tend to focus on medical perspectives and can have the effect of pathologizing old age, with a negative emphasis on illness and decline.

There are several terms used to describe progression through stages in life, depending on the theoretical bases informing them. Those that are based in psychology might refer to life span development (Sugarman, 2001) or life cycle (Erikson, 1982). A sociological approach is more likely to use the concept of life course or life courses, although this is a relatively new approach in the last 40 years and initially was located more in America (Green, 2010). Different approaches will help understand different aspects of age and ageing, and each in some way helps understand the issues that can be encountered along the way. Psychology focuses more on the inner world of personality development, thoughts, attitudes and emotions. It may draw on developmental psychology with its focus on cognitive development and learning and how that influences behaviour. Erikson's analysis of the life cycle is probably one of the more well-known. However, he referred to it as a psychosocial approach as he emphasised an individual life cycle cannot be properly understood without reference to the social context as "individual and society are inextricably woven, dynamically interrelated in continual exchange" (Erikson, 1998, p.108).

Erikson originally proposed six stages in the life cycle, from infancy to a single stage of adulthood, but that was soon extended to eight, with adulthood divided as young adulthood, middle adulthood and old age. In his analysis, each stage of life has tasks to accomplish, or crises to negotiate, and successful negotiation will equip the growing individual with qualities or emerging human strengths, of hope, fidelity and care (Erikson, 1995). Each step or stage of life is grounded in the preceding one. Erikson's model envisaged passing through these as stages in linear, chronological order determined by age. Therefore there is a transition (crisis) between 'Middle adult' (40-60) and 'Later adult' (over 60). The tasks of these two stages are generativity vs stagnation and integrity

vs despair respectively. He sees this in terms of a life-long search for identity, but one in which the experiences of older age and changes in health and occupational roles may pose particular challenges. In later adult life successful integration may depend on whether the individual considers themselves to have been successful in life or if there are some unresolved issues that hinder their self-acceptance or sense of having been fulfilled.

In the original model, old age was characterised by the crisis of integrity vs despair, out of which emerges the strength of wisdom. As he himself entered his 80s and then 90s, Erikson reflected on the adequacy of a single stage of older life and proposed a ninth stage (Erikson 1998). In reviewing the use of the words wisdom and integrity as goals and outcomes of the eighth stage he concluded:

> "Old age demands that one garner and lean on all previous experience, maintaining awareness and creativity with a new grace. There is often something one might call indomitable about many old people….the 'existential identity', that is an integration of past, present and future. It transcends the self and underscores the presence of intergenerational links. It is universal in its acceptance of the human condition" (Erikson, 1998, p.7).

One of the criticisms of such psychosocial approaches to life-stage development is their deterministic nature and failure to incorporate consideration of issues of difference and diversity. However, others, such as Levinson et.al. (1978), now dated, but still relevant, would regard some stages as transitional and stages in which decisions and actions must be made, giving some scope for recognising the agency of the individual in the process an acknowledging that this may mean some follow different pathways. Other psychologists emphasise the influence of relationships in the developing sense of self and identity. Slater, for example, emphasises a sense of belonging which for many is an important anchor, that "develops first within a domestic context, then within a community and educational setting, and thirdly through engagement in occupational and leisure activities (and) it is mainly within the relationships which are formed that our self-esteem and sense of personhood and place are nourished and sustained" (Slater, 1995, p.97).

Sociological theories place much greater emphasis on interactions between individuals and between individuals and the communities and social contexts in which they live. The term life-course is preferred because it places emphasis on the more permeable "historical and broad, blurred and rugged transitional periods rather than clear cut ages and stages" (Green 2010, p.24). The importance of social divisions as contributory factors in the accumulated advantages and disadvantages in life courses is highlighted and lifestyle

choices and opportunities, including education, physical activity, personal health-care, relationships and social networks are relevant, but "heavily influenced by cultural norms and structural inequalities" (Green, 2010, p.175). It is not just individual characteristics, but the cultural context and social structures which affect lives and life-courses.

Writing in 1995, Ginn and Arber acknowledged the study of ageing was still relatively new in sociology and a sociology of ageing was yet to become recognised in its own right in British sociology. However, their thesis that the biological, physiological and social dimensions of ageing were gendered and socially structured was strongly argued. (Ginn and Arber, 1995, p.5). Further both age and gender are related to issues of power and well-being at a macro level and to issues of identity, values and networks or affiliations at micro level. More recent understanding of both the heterogeneity of this group and the cumulative impact of inequalities which occur throughout life has reinforced this emphasis on the need to take account of issues of diversity in older age. Some of the factors shown to have significant influence include gender, ethnicity, and economic circumstances and learning opportunities. These reinforce the need to see older people as diverse individuals who will have made different life choices and experienced different life courses. In the process they will have come to a range of conclusions about themselves and the meaning they attach to their lives (Crawford and Walker, 2011, p.128).

All of this highlights the importance of understanding the impact of ageism when thinking about the lives and experiences of older people. One study concluded that it is "part of the fabric of our everyday lives" that results in the exclusion of older people from many public spaces and social activities or being put at significant disadvantage, (Bytheway et al., 2007, p.5). Both sociology and psychology contribute to understanding issues that arise out of such discrimination. Erikson's personal reflection on experience of last stages of life noted 'bewildering' attitudes of contemporary society towards its elders, in contrast to the praise and even reverence indicated in anthropological and religious documents (Erikson, 1998, p. 116). Our responses to older people also may be shaped by experiences in our own life course development as well as the cultural norms and assumptions about later life in the context we inhabit. Such experiences can shape not just our values and beliefs but our sense of identity and our ability to understand someone else's life course development (Crawford and Walker, 2011, p.8). Although those observations were made to assist training of social workers, the advice seems just as relevant for anyone involved in pastoral care. It reinforces the importance of understanding the influence of prejudices, assumptions and stereotypes that lead to discrimination and to recognise that we each have the capacity to be its agents.

Other research conducted with student social work practitioners similarly found "our actions and behaviour tend to be shaped by our experiences and to some extent by the dominant religious legacies that have become enmeshed with and translated into the cultural traditions, rituals and customs of communities" (Gilligan and Furness, 2006, p.625). Such early life experiences and messages may be carried through life so that for example, the word ministry is ""still largely associated in many people's minds with those who are ordained to minister" (Hawley and Jewell, 2009, p.58) and therefore some of the older people in our congregations do not readily see themselves as engaged in ministry or even eligible to minister.

Older people and the church

In recent years the age profile of ministers in churches has become a matter of concern both nationally and in local Dioceses in the Church of England. In 2012, the Church of England reported the average age of full time stipendiary diocesan clergy was 52 years and 23% were aged 60 or over. The majority, (65%) were aged between 40 and 59 years and only 12% were under 40. (Evangelical Alliance, 2014). The age profile of self-supporting diocesan clergy was higher, with an average age of 60 years and less than 3% under 40. A similar profile for Readers, with 59% over 60 and only 2% under 40. A strategy to increase the number of young people recommended for ordination training had resulted in an increase to 22% who were under 30 in 2012 from 15% in 2002 and 2007.

The issue was not confined to Anglican churches: one London survey found no denomination where the average age was under 51 or 52 (Baptist new, smaller churches) and all others had an average age older than Anglican 54, Orthodox being the highest at 63) (Brierley, 2012). Statistics from the English Church Census in 2005 found the average age of ministers was 54 and of church-goers, 55. There was a greater proportion of women in their 50s than men, but it should be remembered that women's ordination to the priesthood was not possible before 1994 and had delayed many. The report purported to show some correlation between age of minister and 'growing' churches Where leaders were aged 50 or over, 33% were said to be leading growing churches compared with 40% of ministers in their 30's were leading churches that were growing. "25% of ministers under 40 were leading churches that had seen very fast growth between 1998 and 2005 whereas the figure for ministers over 60 was 17% leading a fast growing church". "Younger leaders are more likely to be in charge of city centre churches; older ministers are more likely to lead churches in rural areas" (Evangelical Alliance, 2014).

Age profiles of congregations also have been an issue attracting much attention. There has been a tendency in some areas to adopt a negative language that focuses on the problem of ageing congregations (Jones, 2011). Older congregations may be seen as symptomatic of a dying church (Ross, 2011; Church Times, 2013) or that the church exists only for the old (Wilson, 2013). This taps into descriptions of old age as a stage of life associated with dying or even dead times and an assumption that the time for new things is past. Yet as Chittister suggests many older people "go about living vital years past the time most people would call their productive ones..(and) transition into this last period of human growth and the way it can be lived as a summit-time of life" (Chittister, 2008, p.ix). The influences of negative images and discrimination on grounds of age can operate at personal, cultural and structural levels and can be both overt and hidden. It can affect both the congregations and how the church ministers to others. Woodward (2008), for example, in briefly considering ageism in the church, acknowledges the biological realities of ageing but also sets this reality in the context of social and cultural expectations and assumptions about age. He argues that a model of ageing which focuses on need is less likely to encourage change and development and highlights how a tendency among pastors to assume diminution of intellectual capacity or ability to learn leads to low expectations of older members of congregations, which may affect their ability to live creatively (Woodward 2008, p.21). I would add to that, the extent to which they may be regarded as capable of ministry.

The reality of older or ageing congregations in many churches may well mean increased demands on pastoral care resources and some authors have focused on the importance of understanding some of the questions and issues that older people face (Knox 2002; Collyer, et al. 2008; Hawley and Jewell, 2009). Others have focused on nurturing a sense of purpose, meaning and spiritual growth (MacKinlay, 2001, Jewell 2004; Woodward, 2008), some with particular reference to those living with dementia (MacKinlay, 2006; Morse and Hitchings, 2008; Swinton, 2012). Therefore, without minimising the reality of issues associated with ageing, their concern is to deepen understanding of the spiritual as well as practical needs of older people and to develop creative ministry among them. Woodward (2008) suggests the primary task of the last period of life as a spiritual one of integration and one in which there must remain the possibility of spiritual growth. This attention to faith development and nurture in older people places an emphasis on lifelong learning. Rohr has an engaging way of describing it: "I believe that God gives us our soul, our deepest identity, our True Self, our unique blueprint, at our own "immaculate conception".... We are given a span of years to discover it, to choose it, and to live our own

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destiny to the full……….We do not "make" or "create" our souls; we just "grow" them up….." (Rohr, 2011, L182).

Lifelong learning, learning throughout life, may be understood as recognising the potential to learn at any stage in life. The changes in demography noted above and changes in patterns of church-going may mean that increasingly many coming into older age, if they find their way into contact with churches, are not going to be returners but those who have little knowledge or experience of the Christian story. The comprehensive and encouraging report of the Board of Education explores implications of this and advocates a lifelong learning approach as one way to meet the challenge and to find ways of enabling those in a younger 'rising elderly' generation who may be less familiar with the Christian story to integrate learning with personal experiences (Board of Education, 2012, p.26). Winter (2013) suggests that many old people find comfort in religious faith and that "pastoral experience confirms that many old people find, or rediscover, a living faith, (that is) less a matter of preparing for the end than making a fresh beginning, often prompted by having the time to think things through."(Winter, 2013, ch.10).

All of this means churches will need to be more imaginative and less stereotypical when engaging with those who are entering older age, who have much to offer for service and spiritual growth but are likely to resist the stereotypical allocation of tasks such as noticesheet folders and coffee makers (Hanson, 2008, p.125). As a strong advocate of intergenerational initiatives and responses, Hanson also suggests while many older adults will look for opportunities to use their talents and share experiences to make a difference in these later years, their impact will remain limited unless there are intergenerational connections made in the process (Hanson, 2009, p.168). Such contact also can be a means of getting to know people as individuals with personal biographies and not merely just one of 'the elderly' (Slater, 1995 p 27). Crucially better understanding might offer opportunity to recognise the resources older people bring to the church as contributors to the spiritual nurturing of the whole community and to use their resources for ministry (Board of Education, 2012). Or as some would put it:

> "(i)n later life, Christians remain subject to the possibility that God will act decisively in history and in their lives in such a way as to turn their lives upside down. They may be called to a new ministry. They may receive new revelation. They may see the fulfilment of a long-awaited hope. In this they do not differ from younger Christians (Hays and Hays, 2003, conclusion).

However, care needs to be taken to nurture and use these resources without taking them for granted or worse "exploiting the ministerial resources generously offered" (Tomkinson, 2012, p.102).

Reflection

A theological approach to understanding age and ageing emphasises the uniqueness and value of individual life-story, with all its experiences, good or bad, and known with much greater depth of knowledge than we will ever attain. It might also point to how God has indeed acted decisively in lives of older people to accomplish tasks of ministry and mission. We might choose to see these as stories of older people who have been empowered to achieve new and great things. The Old Testament contains many such accounts with extraordinary numbers of years: Abraham (99), given a covenant promise from God and Sarai (90), when the news of her pregnancy caused her to laugh (Genesis 18:12). Moses (80) and Aaron (83) obeyed God's call and demanded the freedom of the people from Pharaoh (Exodus 7:7). Although such estimates of age can be dismissed easily as hyperbole, they leave no doubt that age was no barrier to God's action.

References to age in the New Testament are less common. Elizabeth and Zechariah became parents to John in their old age (Luke 1:8-18), a miraculous birth to fulfil God's purposes. They also were deemed examples of people who had lived good lives, "careful to obey all of the Lord's commandments and regulations" (Luke 1:6). The infant Jesus was welcomed by Simeon, of unknown age, but also a "righteous and devout" man who was waiting to see the Messiah before he died. Anna, an 84-year-old woman, whose life was spent "worshipping God with fasting and prayer" was also there (Luke2:37).

Yet I take little comfort in knowing how God called older people like Abraham and believing God's call to ministry is not limited by age, when the church seems to struggle with it. Maybe there is a point at which ministries will change, but surely never a point at which God no longer has any use for us? But maybe there is some comfort in knowing they were people whose ministry grew with their ageing. Peter was expected to still be in ministry when he was older and Paul too, referred to himself as an old man. Perhaps his 'thorn in the side' was something like the thorn of arthritis, a burden for many older people. Their ministry in older age was a natural part of the life course.

As I reflect on this, I cannot help but be aware of my inner struggle with growing old. I am not ready to think of myself as old. But the reality is that age happens to us whether we like it or not and we are more privileged than many to have opportunity to live these

years. There are things I cannot do as well as I used to. This is "all to be expected" at my age – but it does not make it any easier. Even so, I am doing more now in my 'older' age than I ever did – I travel, work abroad, I am still studying and I work as a priest even though I fall the wrong side of the line to be paid for it. Most of this I never expected to do and I can rejoice in what God has empowered me to do. So why am I afraid of this 'old' thing? Is it because I do not want to be patronised for 'doing very well for my age' or forced to stop what I am doing because I cannot manage anymore? This is about identity, of being recognised and valued for doing the things I do. I do not want to become invisible, lost as one of a group called 'the old' who once was something, once was someone. As a priest, I see death and its rituals all the time but I do not want to be their subject. I do not want to think of someone performing those rituals for me – when this 'I am' will be no more – and I become a 'she was'.

But surely these are human anxieties. This is not how God sees us. Even as an older person, I am still a child of God, uniquely created and uniquely loved - for who I am - which of course is not the same as what I do, or what I have done. As Woodward says "I am what I am. And when I come to die, I shall no longer have a past. I shall be remembered as a complete being, formed by my relationships, by all that has happened to me, and all that I have made of it" …. And I will be welcomed home, "not because of what I have been, but because of what I am" (Woodward, 2008, pp.194-195). I find empowerment in that.

Chapter 4

Theoretical Perspectives 3:   Empowerment

"Incline your ear to me and save me" Psalm 71:2.

In this chapter I consider some of the theoretical perspectives behind the issue of empowerment, a concept that runs through the research and is at the heart of the research question. Issues of power and empowerment are relevant to both the practice of collaborative ministry and understanding the experiences of age and ageing.

Contextual introduction

As was noted in Chapter 1, the concept of empowerment was integral to my first experience of church ministry and the formation and roles of those of us who became part of the Ministry and Mission Team at All Saints. The context of this parish initiative was one in which it was taught that all are called through baptism into ministry and mission, and each is equipped for service through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It was part of our role descriptions to empower others in their ministries, but the meaning attached to empowerment was undefined and the process by which we were to achieve it was framed only in terms of helping and working collaboratively. I had come to the role with a background in social work education and training at a time when empowerment was an evolving concept, but one in which the emphasis was on 'working with' people rather than 'doing for'. This seemed consistent with what was expected of this new role.

However, during that period of ministry at All Saints, I identified a dissonance between my personal experience of going into church ministry, which I described as disempowering, and the experience of working with a group of older people, many of whom felt marginalised in the church, which I found empowering and enriching of the church and of my own ministry. Together we worked to find new ways of using their gifts for the ministry and mission of the church. It had the effect, for a time at least, of giving them voice and making them a more visible presence in the church as active participants in its mission. It also brought them into closer relationship with others in the community and strengthened their sense of belonging. Later, I encountered the apparently confident exercise of ministry by older people in St David's, which appeared to stand in contrast with some of the experiences of older people at All Saints. I named the operant factor of difference in these experiences as empowerment, raising the question for research: what

is it that empowers older people in ministry? By implication, it also asked, what are the issues that militate against that empowerment.

The concept of empowerment

Empowerment came into common use in the vocabulary of social work methods and practice in the1990s (Adams, 2003, p.5), although it had gained currency in America from the 1970s and was especially associated with Black empowerment and the work of Barbara Solomon (Evans, 1992, p.141; Adams, 2003, p.18). In the same way as the concept of collaborative ministry had gained usage in the church context, empowerment became something of a buzzword in the social work context, but with limited discussion or agreement over its definition (Thompson, 2007, p.21).

Like collaborative ministry, empowerment has historical antecedents which suggest it is not an entirely new concept. These include ways of working with people such as, self-help, user-involvement, user-led activities and participation (Adams, 2003, p.18). The longest-standing of these approaches is self-help, which can be traced back to mid-Victorian mutual aid movements, such as the Charity Organisation Society. However, these were open to criticism for their emphasis on individual responsibility to deal with problems without considering or addressing the impact of inequalities and power in society (Adams, 2003; Mullaly, 2010). Empowerment as a contemporary concept has much stronger sensitivity to issues of power and inequality. Therefore, although the emphasis remains on helping people, generally referred to in social work as service users, to draw on their own resources to make changes in their lives, there is much greater attention given to the circumstances in which they are living and the impact of experiences of discrimination and oppression. As Adams asserts, "the authenticity of empowerment should derive from being rooted in the circumstances of those who use services, not those who deliver them" (Adams, 2003, p.3).

All this can be summed up in two definitions of empowerment, which I choose as working definitions for the purposes of this research. Both come from a social work perspective, so use the language of service user and client, which does not readily translate into a church context, but could be taken to apply to any member of church congregations. The first. focuses on the purpose of empowerment for those being empowered as, "challenging their disempowerment, having more control over their lives, being able to influence others and bring about change" (Croft and Beresford, 2000, p.16). The second is one of the more recent definitions and focuses on the issue of power and sums empowerment up as an approach which,

> "seeks to help clients gain powers of decision and action over their own lives by reducing the effect of social and personal blocks to exercising their existing power, increasing their capacity of self-confidence to use their power, and transferring power to people who lack it" (Payne, 2014, p. 294).

Although I am drawing heavily on an understanding of empowerment in a social work context, it is important to acknowledge it is a concept widely used in different contexts and has roots in other disciplines, including psychology, counselling, political sciences, health care, economics and religion (Teater, 2014). It is likely it will be interpreted and applied differently in different contexts and even within different disciplines. In the business organisation context for example, where it similarly gained currency in the latter part of the twentieth century, it is more likely to be concerned with management practices "based on the idea that giving employees skills, resources, authority, opportunity, motivation, as well holding them responsible and accountable for outcomes of their actions, will contribute to their competence and satisfaction" (Business Dictionary, 2016). Such a process implies organisational, if not hierarchical, differences in status and a 'top-down' approach. The emphasis seems to be more on equipping or enabling people to perform well in the organisation and does not effect any exchange of power. This kind of enablement can be distinguished from empowerment as,

> "(t)o authorise, licence or make able is a process whereby someone uses their power to enable someone else to do something; what that something is, its nature, goals and extent – is controlled by the enabler. Thus the process of enablement is circumscribed by the power of the enabler and does not involve giving power over the process to the enabled" (Jack, 1995, p.11, cited in Thompson, 2007, p.22)

There is little written about the process of empowerment in a church context apart from some work of American authors, which focuses on leadership development (see for example, Wright, 2000; Campbell, 2013) or spiritual dimensions to empowerment in organisations more generally (Bayes, 2015). In considering empowerment in the church, Campbell (2013) says empowerment,

> "takes place when pastors and church leaders delegate responsibility for ministry to laypeople and actually allow them to do ministry. It means pastors and church leaders allow laypeople to participate or act on the power they already have through the Holy Spirit" (Campbell, 2013, ch.8).

The language is interesting for the implied dynamic of interpersonal power, but Campbell insists this is about permission-giving and can be distinguished from hierarchy or control

because it requires leaders to cultivate a servant-leader mentality in which their role is to equip, facilitate and resource others. He sees the formation of teams as key to overcoming hierarchy and clergy/laity dichotomy and that "self-directed teams of gifted individuals are the ultimate outcome of the empowering process" (Campbell, 2013, ch.14). Wright (2000) also advocates servant leadership and building teams as a model for empowering ministerial leadership (Wright, 2000, pp.40-51).

Otherwise, empowerment in the church tends to be associated more with the work of God through the Holy Spirit. The word itself does not appear in the Bible, except in some translations such as the New Living Translation, where it is equated with 'strengthening' (see for example Ephesians 3:14, where Paul prays for the Christians to be empowered by inner strength). But it is implicit in God's words to Moses as he sent him to Pharaoh, "see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders that I have put in your power" (Exodus 4:21), and in the sending out of the twelve by Jesus, who "gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases" (Luke 9:1-6). The Pentecost story (Acts 2) is one of empowerment and transformation and is manifested in Christians being enabled to communicate across different languages and cultures to "act as co-workers with God in the renewal of creation" (Migliore, 2004, p.228). The teaching of the early church was that different gifts of the Spirit were given to empower and enable all members of the church community to minister in a variety of ways and roles, but as members of one body working together for the purposes of God (1 Corinthians 12). Gifts for ministry were given and people who had been fearful, weak and bereft, found strength and ability to live transformed lives and spread the word. This approach to understanding empowerment focuses more on purpose and outcome than process and so tends not to examine issues in its implementation through human agency.

There are however, those who have drawn strong links between aspects of empowerment, which emphasise self-determination, and liberation theology, which "implies freeing oneself from inner and outer encumbrances which inhibit the fulfilment of one's potential" (Evans, 1992, p.139). Evans, an American professor in social work, goes on to liken liberation theology and empowerment in that both combine critical reflection and action to achieve transformation. She helpfully explores some of the processes by which empowerment may be achieved, including understanding the dynamics of power operating in relationships and social systems, and argues for consciousness raising, working in partnership, respecting and encouraging existing strengths of knowledge and resources, skills building and developing confidence in feelings of competence and self-

efficacy (Evans, 1992, pp.140-145). Evans concludes that an "interdisciplinary model or praxis, drawing on insights from both social work and liberation theology, would be an important contribution to the struggle of oppressed people everywhere to attain the justice for which they strive" (Evans, 1992, p.146). Allen (2008), also an American social work professor, has written similarly and emphasises the role of critical reflection and the power of personal narrative, suggesting that "change begins with an invitation to articulate one's story and examine optional meanings" and the worker's role is a collaborative one, helping to identify and reinforce strengths (Allen, 2008).

Issues of power in empowerment

Power is at the heart of empowerment, just as it is in collaborative ministry, as discussed in Chapter 2. However, although many of the definitions used refer to power being given or devolved, it is a core value of empowerment that power cannot be imposed on people (Thompson, 2007). Rather, it is argued, power must be claimed and "empowerment is the realisation of that claim" (Mullaly, 2010, p.237, cited in Mullender, Ward and Fleming, 2013, p.24). But the transaction that is involved does not necessarily mean loss of power by the one who is seeking to empower others. Having some form of power may be necessary to be able to help, so long as it is used appropriately.

An empowerment approach accepts that the person being helped is the expert in their reality and it is not for the worker to define it for them (Teater, 2014, p.88). It will also assume that people have strengths and resilience to overcome their problems, albeit with help, but the focus always must be on them as people in their context (environment) (Teater, 2014, p.59). Croft and Beresford suggest therefore that it may pose a challenge to someone who sees themselves as 'the professional' with knowledge and skills that equip them to care for others, who they regard as vulnerable or needy. Such attitudes, they suggest, will only serve to perpetuate unequal relationships (Croft and Beresford, 2000, p.118). They were writing for social workers, but the same might apply to pastors and church leaders.

This connects with some of the issues of power in leadership of collaborative ministry discussed in Chapter 2. Where leaders feel their personal authority and status is challenged by sharing power with others, or where involvement of others is adversely influenced by personal attitudes or cultural assumptions, empowerment will be difficult to achieve. It also underlines that it is not helpful to deny the existence of power in relationships, which may be a challenge for those whose emphasis is on equality without acknowledging the complexity of what that means. Power in the church and ministry

context exists and may come from role or position, such as leader, resources or expertise, and to "work or minister effectively, we will need to understand the power that we have and exercise it sensitively and appropriately" (Nash, Pimlott and Nash, 2008, p.34).

Thompson describes three levels of power in empowerment: personal, cultural and structural. Personal (psychological) power may include skills of communication, influence, confidence and role or position in an organisation. Cultural power is perpetuated in common language or taken for granted assumptions and structural power is associated with a individual's location in the social hierarchy (Thompson, 2007, pp.4-6). He also quotes the work of Rowlands (1998), who talks about 'power with' (strength in unity) and the importance of working together, and 'power from within', which is,

> "the spiritual strength and uniqueness that resides in each one of us and makes us fully human. Its basis is self-acceptance and self-respect, which extend in turn, to respect for and acceptance of others as equals. This power can be what enables an individual to hold a position or activity in the face of overwhelming opposition, or to take serious risk" (Rowlands, 1998, p.14, cited in Thompson, 2007, p.16).

This has both theological insight and important reminders of the multi-layered concepts of both power and empowerment.

Issues in working to empower others

As already noted, a great deal has been written about empowerment in a wide range of disciplines in the last 20-30 years. In social work, it has application in methods of working with individuals, families and groups (Mullender and Ward, 1991; Lee, 1994; Mullender, Ward and Fleming, 2013; Payne, 2014), organisations and communities (Braye and Preston-Shoot; Adams, 1996; 2003; 2008) or more generally in anti-oppressive practice (Dominelli, 2004; Dalrymple and Burke, 2006; Thompson, 2011; Thompson, 2007). Together, these texts have highlighted the complexity of contributory factors such as the role of human agency, personal responsibility and self-direction in the process of helping people claim power to bring about change (Thompson, 2007). There is also greater understanding of the role and appropriate use of advocacy to assist people in accessing sources of power and the confidence to manage situations (Adams, 2003; Thompson, 2007). However, as Thompson recognises, the broader the scope of empowerment from individuals to communities, the more difficult it may be to achieve (Thompson, 2007, p.23).

In any context empowerment demands recognition first that discrimination and oppression exist and may occur because of any one of, or combination of, factors,

including, class, race, gender, sexuality, mental health, disability or age. Secondly that discrimination and oppression have negative consequences on individuals and groups and will lead to their disempowerment. To work in an empowering way therefore requires an understanding of the processes that lead to discrimination, self-awareness and commitment to act. Empowerment can be regarded as a form of anti-discriminatory practice (Teater, 2014, p.69) and must be more than words or good intention. It may demand change in all parties as, unless it is,

> "accompanied by a commitment to challenge and combat injustice and oppression that shows itself in action as well as words, there will be a tendency… simply to rewrite accounts of practice, appropriating the terminology of empowerment whilst retaining status as experts with top-down power" (Mullender, Ward and Fleming, 2013, p.24).

The model developed by Thompson (1992; 2006; 2011) to examine the processes and impact of discrimination, used Appendix 2, is particularly helpful when considering how to work in a way that is empowering of others. The model demonstrates how discrimination operates at personal, cultural and structural levels and therefore anti-discriminatory practice, or working to empower others, must do the same. It means that, at a personal level it may be necessary to build confidence, self-esteem and knowledge and skills. At a cultural level, it may require challenging internalised negative messages and stereotypes and at structural levels, understanding the impact of where the person is located within social divisions and raising awareness of how problems are not necessarily a matter of personal failing, but the impact of wider social or political issues (Thompson, 2007, pp.21-22). Some assumptions about older people, such as stereotypical attitudes about dependency, assumptions about resistance or lack of capacity to undertake new tasks or the need for protection, can be stifling and undermining, and will militate against their empowerment (Thompson, 2007, p.78). An empowering approach therefore should focus on strengths, rather than weaknesses or deficiencies, but help may be needed to identify and build on strengths and to overcome various factors that mask them, such as fear, low self-esteem and lack of confidence, loss, being made to feel invisible or silenced and deteriorating health (Thompson, 2007). All these factors have direct application to working to empower older people.

One strategy that has been found to make a positive contribution to building up resilience and confidence is story-telling (Thompson, 2007). This relates to the work on links between liberation theology and empowerment noted above, but applied to work with individuals or small groups. There is little written about story-telling as a method of

intervention in social work, but its use in assessment and value in health care and counselling is well established. It has been shown to be productive of learning and development, resilience and empowerment (Drumm, 2013). Such narrative work can help people connect with the meanings they attach to aspects of their lives and explore their lives from different perspectives. Thompson links this with the concept of voice, which he suggests is "central to an understanding of empowerment" (Thompson, 2007, p.29) and is especially relevant to people who might be disadvantaged, marginalised or feel they have been silenced in some way. Empowerment, therefore, involves both listening to people and creating opportunities for their voices to be heard.

Reflection

The dissonance between my personal experience and the experience of ministry with older people that played a large part in forming the intention to research, was one that I labelled an issue of empowerment. That was my language, shaped by assumptions from a previous stage of life. Looking back now and asking what it was that caused that sense of disempowerment in my first period of ministry, I can identify three things, that happen to reflect three levels already referred to several times. There was lack of clarity about my place and role in the church at a local level and in the organisation of Church of England, compounded by structural issues about age and employment. This led to my questioning or doubting my right to be there. Secondly the influence of external and internalised messages about what qualifies someone for ministry or for types and levels of ministry, and cultural assumptions about ministry. Thirdly, a loss of personal confidence in the knowledge and skills I knew I had in a secular context, endorsed by the roles I fulfilled, but found unrecognised or ignored in the church.

By contrast I saw what happened with the Story-sharing Group as empowerment. I was a catalyst in enabling them to come together and there was strength in numbers. I empowered them by encouraging them in their story-telling, from which they derived strength of sharing common experience. I empowered their discovery and affirmation of the resources and abilities they had and encouraged their self-belief and their growing confidence to use them. Perhaps most of all there was the listening – to themselves, in their own words, and to each other and the empowering experience of being heard. As noted earlier, "Speaking first to be heard is power over. Hearing to bring forth speech is empowering" (Morton, 1985, cited in Bons-Storm, 1996, p.11). They regained a voice and with it came the possibilities of stronger connection and a sense of belonging.

At first I was surprised to note Thompson's reference to storytelling as a means of building resilience in the empowerment process. Now I am surprised that I had not made that connection before. I know from experience of autoethnography and how listening to stories, giving space for people to speak and hear their own stories is all part and parcel of pastoral care and pastoral ministry. And surely it is there in so many of our stories in Scripture. How many of the Psalms have the psalmist rehearsing the history of God's dealing with his people, or his own life journey? Although his plea is for rescue, the psalmist in Psalm 71, which echoes through this research has many of the qualities of empowerment. Here is someone aware of his powerlessness, in this case associated with age. But he knows he is heard, he is listened to, "incline your ear to me" (v.2). And in rehearsing his story he rediscovers the knowledge that he has never been forgotten. He has a place in God's sight and in God's story, "Upon you I have leaned from my birth; it was you who took me from my mother's womb." (v.6). There is both trust and hope in the relationship "For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust" (v.5). His plea is for strength as well as protection "Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress, to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress" (v.1). All these are ingredients of empowerment and the outcome is one of being empowered to go on, "O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and grey hairs, O God, do not forsake me until I proclaim your might to all the generations to come" (vv.17-18).

Here is a story of empowerment. Here is a story of God at work empowering the one he loves with a faithful, trustworthy love. Empowerment *is* God's story. It is there from the creation narrative, through the calling, leading, commissioning of his people to be reformed and renewed, to become all he created them to be. It is there through the gospel story of incarnation so that we might have life (John 10:10). It is there in the calling of all who choose to follow into ministry.

Chapter 5

Methodology for Research

"When we use our own stories, or those of others for research, we give testimony to what we have witnessed, and that testimony creates a voice"

Frank, 1995, cited in Etherington, 2004, p.9.

This chapter explains the choice of methodologies that were used to find answers to the research enquiry into empowerment of older people in ministry. Examination of collaborative ministry and issues of age and ageing found that both are affected by power that operates at multi-levels. It also found an absence of voices of older people and to a lesser extent of gender, and limited recognition given to the extent to which older people are agents and no just recipients of ministry. Therefore, it was crucial that both the research design and methodology had capacity for voices of experiences beyond my own to be heard. In giving scope for those real-life experiences it also had to be realistic about some of the challenges of what becoming older means for them and the ministries they exercise.

Contextual introduction

The search for an appropriate methodology was complicated for a time by the fact that I had approached it from a negative standpoint. Mindful of my own experience, I wanted to explore what it was that empowered the ministries of older people, while holding on to frustration about how age and age barriers seemed to have affected me at every point of my journey in ministry. This led to initial determination to focus on exposing the reality and impact of ageism in the church, but from this personal perspective. It was necessary to acknowledge and move away from such a highly subjective and somewhat narrow approach before any progress could be made in clarifying either the purpose of the research or determining how to go about it. Issues of ageism are relevant to understanding the ministries exercised by older people but a focus on that by itself was unlikely to assist in understanding what it is that empowers them in ministry despite the existence of ageism. However, listening to the stories and experiences of others in ministry might be one way of understanding more about my own story as well as gaining wider understanding about what it is that empowers them.

Whilst the choice of methodology and methods should flow from and to the purpose of research, it also must make sense to me as the researcher and who I am or as Etherington (2004) suggests it had to fit with "my underlying values, my philosophies in life, my views of reality and my beliefs about how knowledge is known and created" (Etherington, 2004,

p.71). This included the influence of a practice background in social work, counselling and criminal justice, as well as experiences in church ministry. In all this I have listened to stories people tell about themselves and the contexts in which they are shaped, and am intrigued by them. I have a constructivist view of knowledge which means that my research will take place within an interpretative paradigm (Swinton and Mowatt, 2006; Cameron and Duce, 2013). Having previously used autoethnography to explore my experience in lay ministry (Goatly 2010), I briefly considered whether this could be extended into exploring experiences in ordained ministry, but this research needed to be wider than my own experience if it was to produce deeper understanding of ministries of older people.

The aims of research

Taking time to reflect on this helped to clarify the purpose of the research as one of extending knowledge and understanding of the role older people play in the life and ministry of the church and particularly what enables or hinders them in that. It was a search for new knowledge and understanding rather than knowledge that seeks to explain and fit with chosen theories of people's engagement with the world (Etherington, 2004, p.21). Initially, I resisted describing the purpose as evaluation partly because some of my previous experiences in research and quality assurance in higher education had connotations of exercising judgement from a position of authority or power and this did not sit comfortably with a focus on the experience of people with whom I lived and worked in the church (this is expanded in appendix 3). However, as most real world research is evaluation of some form (Robson, 2002), I accepted that I could not exclude some evaluation and as the research progressed and I reflected on the data gathered, I found this to be the case.

However, at this level of research, it would not be enough to seek extended or deeper knowledge and understanding of the experiences of older people in ministry without it having some transformative purpose. In some of my previous careers, I had designed research to incorporate the voices of victims, survivors and service users with a purpose of better informing policy and practice development. There had been some evidence that this was achieved. There is also a wealth of research, especially participatory research with marginalised and disempowered groups, including older people, that demonstrates potential for transformational challenge to practice (Knox, 2002; Swinton and Mowatt, 2006; Woodward, 2008). Even so, I was surprised by my ambivalence about claiming such purpose for this research. Perhaps this was due to my sense of disempowerment

within the church context and the realisation that this was not just about the possibility of improving practice, but challenging a fundamental value base of unacknowledged discrimination and injustice. Additionally, by the time the research took place it was not certain that I would remain in that context, so my capacity to effect or implement change could be limited. As the research progressed therefore the purpose was reframed in terms of hope that the knowledge and understanding generated might inform practice of collaboration even if my role was to disseminate it rather than directly implement it.

Robson (2002) identifies five inter-related aspects in research design: purpose, theory, research questions, methods and sampling strategy (Robson, 2002, p.81). He further suggests that these should be kept in balance and in flexible (qualitative) designs, there is a dynamic relationship between them that requires revisiting as the research progresses and the framework emerges. Having clarified the purpose of the research, the question became more clearly a 'how' or 'why' question about the empowerment of ministries exercised, than a narrative enquiry into what they are. All of this informed the search for an appropriate methodology and led to a decision to use case study, which is ideal when a "'how' or 'why' question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the researcher has no control" (Gray, 2004, p.124). However, as has been acknowledged already, it was not possible to leave aside my own experiences in ministry and I concluded it was both important and necessary to draw on autoethnography as a contributory method in this research.

Using autoethnography methodology
Autoethnography is an approach that places emphasis on the ways in which the researcher interacts with the culture being researched, and connects the personal to the cultural by placing the self within a social context (Reed-Danahay, 1997). Its focus therefore must be on "analysis and communication of those experiences that have shaped the researcher" (Walton, 2014, l.528). It demands critical and dynamic engagement with the personal story and context and through such dialogue seeks to gain greater understanding. The first use of autoethnography as a research method is credited to Hayano in 1979 (Armstrong, 2008), but it has become increasingly used especially among practitioners in counselling and psychotherapy (Etherington, 2004) and as a tool in a range of professions, including educators, social workers, medical professionals, and clergy (Chang, 2009, p 52-3). It has its place in theological reflection as a way of "using personal experience to investigate a particular issue or concern that has wider cultural or religious significance" (Walton, 2014, pp.xxxi-xxxii).

Walton (2014) describes 'divergent streams' within autoethnography out of which three are considered particularly relevant to theological reflection: evocative, analytical and performance autoethnography. In performance autoethnography experience is expressed as a "staged act, intervention (or) public display and political display" (Walton, 2014, p.7). This research is not performance autoethnography. Analytical autoethnography is particularly espoused by Anderson (2006) as having a place alongside the use of other empirically gathered data. It seeks to "gain insight into some broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data themselves" (Anderson 2006, p.387, cited in Walton 2014, p.6). This research has limited elements of analytical autoethnography in that it uses autoethnography alongside other methods of data gathering for this purpose.

It is, however, more clearly evocative autoethnography which has as an aim the generation of empathetic response to the researcher's story through writing "meaningfully and evocatively about things that matter and may make a difference.... And to write from an ethic of care and concern" (Ellis and Bochner 2003, p.2013, cited in Walton, 2014, p.4). This description resonates with the intention and motivation of this research and is fu*rthe*r supported by the argument that such writing comes through "recounting experiences of personal transformation" or epiphanies (Walton, 2104, p.5). I have already noted the epiphanic moments in my ministry when I realised the potential of older people to be agents of ministry and mission through the Story-sharing Group and there was a paradigm shift in the research process that led me to focus on the positive thesis that ministries that are indeed being exercised by older people.

However, in its development and growing use, autoethnography was not without critics particularly for its subjectivity, questions of academic legitimacy and ethical dilemmas arising from the inevitability of including others in the telling of a personal story (Morse, 2002). Despite these acknowledged dilemmas, it has been rigorously defended and used as a research method, with an increasing volume of published work (Bochner and Ellis, 2002; Holt, 2003; Ellis, 2004; Chang, 2009; Muncey, 2010; Holman Jones, Adams and Ellis 2015). My own experience of using autoethnography (Goatly, 2010) convinced me of its capacity as a reliable and valid method that can produce research which is authentic, persuasive and even transformative. It appropriately complements case study here.

Case Study as Methodology
Case study is a form of real world research (Robson, 2002, Simons 2009) and respects the real-life context in a way that achieves a "vividness and detail not typically present in more analytic reporting formats" (Marshall and Rossman, 2010, p267). It can be described

as "an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a 'real life' context" (Simons, 2009 p.21) and an "empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin 2009, p. 18). Both these descriptions point to the kind of enquiry I wanted to make but perhaps the most persuasive was Thomas' description of an example case study as a 'drilling down' to find explanation for a paradoxical finding or situation. (Thomas, 2011, p. 104).

It is a methodology with which I am familiar because of its history in social sciences and in a wide range of professional contexts (Cresswell, 2007). In the past, it has informed both my teaching and practice in social work and education. However, I had mixed feelings about the choice of case study as a methodology recalling some of the case studies used in assessment. I had seen and marked too many that were little more than descriptive narratives with limited evidence of reflective thinking or analysis. Therefore, in determining how case study might be an appropriate methodology in this research I had to distinguish those kinds of case studies and case study as a research methodology which uses a systematic approach to gathering and analysing information.

Various authors have sought to identify different case study typologies (Simons, 2009; Yin, 2009; Thomas, 2011). Stake (2005) argues there are two basic types of case study: intrinsic which aims to better understand a particular case rather than a generic phenomenon, and instrumental which provide insight into a wider issue and focus more on how or how well something works. . He also suggests instrumental case studies can be extended to several cases and such collective or multiple case studies can lead to even better understanding and possible wider theorising. Since my primary aim was not to evaluate how well the projects or ministries were doing, I would be taking an intrinsic approach, seeking to achieve better understanding because "in all its particularity or ordinariness, the case itself is of interest" (Stake 2005, p.445).

The value and legitimacy of case study methodology has been debated positively and promoted in recent years by authors such as Yin (2009), Stake (1995, 2008) and Simons (2009). However, there have been a number of criticisms of it, especially where it uses qualitative methods, which focus on issues of generalizability, objectivity and reliability. Yin talks of these challenges as 'traditional prejudices' (Yin, 2009) and Simons as 'potential weaknesses' that need not be limitations but rather "questions about how they

are perceived and interpreted" (Simons 2009, p. 24). Yin's response to criticism of case study as lacking in rigour is to argue for systematic procedures, and to guard against allowing equivocal evidence or biased views affecting the direction and conclusion of the research (Yin, 2009, p. 14). He also argues that attention to three principles of data collection: drawing on multiple sources of evidence, ensuring a sound, reliable case study database and a establishing a transparent chain of evidence will substantially increase the quality of the research (Yin 2009, pp.114-17). The importance attached to triangulation through using multiple sources of evidence (Stake 1995; Yin 2009) therefore also informed the choice of methods used here.

The issue of reliability relates to trustworthiness and Padgett (1998) tackles some of the common criticisms of qualitative research by suggesting a number of strategies to enhance rigor and trustworthiness, as shown in Table 1 below. Most of these were used to a greater or lesser extent in this research.

Strategies for enhancing rigor and trustworthiness			
Strategy	Reactivity	Researcher bias	Respondent bias
Prolonged involvement	+	–	+
Triangulation	+	+	+
Peer de-briefing/ support	0	+	0
Member checking	+	+	+
Negative case analysis	0	+	0
Audit trail	0	+	0

+ = positive effect in reducing threat: - = negative effect in reducing threat: no effect

Table 1: Strategies for enhancing rigor and trustworthiness in qualitative research. Taken from Padgett, 1998, p.95

The issue of objectivity was probably the greater challenge posed by the choice of both autoethnography and case study using interviews with participants who I knew and among whom I worked. Such challenges are common, perhaps inevitable, in flexible design research where there is a close relationship between the researcher and the context or respondents. Flick (2014), for example, refers to the communication between researcher and participants as an "explicit part of the knowledge" and the "subjectivity of the researcher and those being studied becomes part of the research process" (Flick, 2014, p.17). He further suggests the reflections of the researcher on the experience of research are data in their own right (Flick, 2014, p.17). Others suggest the "ability to put aside personal feelings and preconceptions is more a function of how reflexive one is rather than how objective one is because it is not possible for researchers to put aside things about which they are not aware" (Ahern, 1999, cited in Robson, 2002, p. 172). Swinton and Mowatt say much the same thing in describing reflexivity as a "mode of

knowing which accepts the impossibility of the researcher standing outside of the research field" (Swinton and Mowatt, 2006, p.59).

I anticipated the challenge of subjectivity might be stronger when it came to analysing the data gathered. Here too, the key lies in reflexivity and it was vital to be aware of the potential influence of personal experience and values on how I listened to and interpreted the stories of others. As Clark-King (2004) makes clear "the researcher is always a filter for the material, which will be in some ways changed in its passage from the interviewee to the written page" (Clark-King, 2004, pp.5-6). Padgett (1998) suggests a technique of 'bracketing' might be employed to consciously seek to set aside assumptions, beliefs and feelings in order to understand the respondent's experience. However, she is also clear that realistically it is not the aim to eliminate or repress, but to rather identify feelings so they do not interfere with the study (Padgett, 1998, p.41).

The ability to be reflexive is an essential component in what is required of good qualitative research (Etherington, 2004). In an often-quoted description, reflexivity "requires an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process" (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999, p. 228). Therefore I had to accept it would not be possible to carry out this research, using dialogue with others as a means of gathering data, as if in a vacuum free of my own experiences, culture, history and values. The meanings I attached to concepts such as empowerment as well as ministry might not be those of the participants. That is one reason why it was important to acknowledge where parts of my own story might intersect with others or might be rekindled through what I heard and learned from the participants in the research. My own experience and story both as an older person in ministry and as someone committed to collaboration inclusive of older people were an integral part of my motivation to research. By acknowledging where there might be resonances, or where something in the research process and data might cause me to reflect or connect with my own experience, I hoped to bring an appropriate level of self-awareness to what I was embarking on.

The research process and data gathering
Several authors have described the general map of case study research (Gray, 2004; Marshall and Rossman 2010; Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2009), although Robson suggests the details of case study research design are more likely to emerge in the process of data collection and analysis (Robson 2002). Nevertheless, a typical case study will involve the selection of either a single case or a group of related cases. The cases identified for this

research were activities led by older people in St David's Church, specifically the Lunch Club, Coffee Shop and Housegroups.

One possible method in case study is the use of questionnaires for both quantitative and qualitative data gathering. However, I was not convinced they could give sufficient scope for the voices of the older people to emerge and this was a key part of the purpose of research. Some of the older people in the Story-sharing Group, for example, found it very difficult to write about their experiences, but much less so to talk about them. Interviews therefore were selected as the primary method of data gathering. This is perhaps the most common tool in qualitative research and case study particularly (Yin, 2014) and also significantly in practical theology (Cameron and Duce, 2013). These interviews would be a means of listening to stories in such a way as to give voice to experiences which have otherwise not been heard, and as Frank suggests "(w)hen we use our own stories, or those of others for research, we give testimony to what we have witnessed, and that testimony creates a voice" (Frank 1995, cited in Etherington 2004, p.9)

I wanted the interviews to be as open as possible but some structure was necessary to be sure data was gathered that could be cross-referenced, so an agenda of issues and some prompt questions were used (see Appendix 4). So as not to assume common understanding of ministry, an opening question to everyone invited them to say what the word ministry meant to them. For the same reason, rather than using the word empowerment, participants were asked about what had helped or hindered them into ministry and to continue with their ministries. Generally, interviews then proceeded as might be expected with questions and answers according to the broad agenda, with some flexibility in wording and language. However, most resembled what Wengraf would describe as conversational interaction (Wengraf, 2001). Occasionally I noted points in responses that touched my own experience. Generally, I would not vocalise these but in a few situations did share them. At first this felt uncomfortable as I had been trained in interview methods that would regard self-disclosure as inappropriate, but I was engaged in something different here and such interjections are entirely consistent with reflexive interviewing (Etherington, 2004).

All interviews were recorded and whenever possible I transcribed them within two days of the interview and the transcript given to the participant to review. Two came back correcting typographical errors in the transcripts, three expressed some surprise at how they came across, worrying about the poor grammar, and two made corrections to clarify

what they meant to say. Copies of both the interview tapes and transcripts were stored on an electronic and searchable database as well as in transcribed paper form. Recording also proved helpful when something a participant said in describing their experiences nudged something in my own story, causing momentary lapse in concentration and listening. Having all interviews recorded so they could be listened to again and having personally undertaken the transcribing proved a great benefit to both hearing what was said and analysis of the responses.

Some triangulation could be achieved by access to documentation such as minutes of meetings and Annual Reports. Most of this until 2008, was in paper form and required trawling through what was stored un-indexed at the church. A check with the Diocesan archive confirmed that there were no more relevant records available. This therefore was a patchy, but not insubstantial source of data. By and large they were subjective accounts of those involved in the projects reporting either to the PCC or in Annual Reports for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM), but they did provide some valuable historical context. Since I was routinely present at both Lunch Club and Coffee Shop, some observations were possible, although it was difficult to do this uninterrupted by calls about work, for example if someone came into Coffee Shop to speak to a member of the clergy, or in Lunch Club following up on pastoral matters that would otherwise go unaddressed and required immediate attention. In the end therefore, although there was some data generated in this way, this was of limited additional value in the research.

At quite an early stage of the interview process, it became clear that participants at St David's were not expressing the kinds of dissatisfaction that I was expecting. They seemed to be much more confident than I expected or had experienced in previous contexts. Looking at the demography of the church and given that many of the participants had been in that church for 30 or even 40 years or more and still played significant roles in the activities we were looking at, it seemed that their confidence might stem from being 'in control'. Older people here were in the majority and it was younger people who were invisible. This was in contrast to the anecdotal views of those in All Saints, who expressed a sense of marginalisation and being unnoticed.

It was important not to ignore this apparently anomalous response and to undertake what Padgett (1998) would call negative case analysis. It was possible that I had misheard the people in the former context, in which case I would have to consider if the issue was more mine than theirs. Therefore further ethics approval was sought to go back to All Saints, the first context and interview some of those who had been involved in the Story-sharing

Group. Sadly time had impacted on the group and several had died in the intervening period, but four further interviews were conducted among them, using the same interview schedule. The mood was discernibly different and one in particular spelled out a strong sense of marginalisation, which seemed to be associated in her mind with being in the minority and "not important enough to be involved in conversation" (Yvonne, aged 83).

Some ethical considerations

In formulating the research plan and determining its methods it was necessary to consider a range of ethical issues and especially possible power issues. One was my relationship with research participants and the potential influence of what might be seen as disparity in status. While attending to issues of power in interview is essential, Lee (1993) is critical of researchers who focus on power dynamics simply in terms of disparity in status and considers a number of other factors such as gender, disparity of disclosure rights (the interviewer being not obliged to disclose anything of themselves), and power of control over the information disclosed. It can be argued that once consent is signed, control ebbs away from participants, since they are dependent on the interviewer to accurately represent their words and experience (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.65). The decision to transcribe all interviews and give a copy to participants for their approval and keeping was one way to try and address this. Information about recording was included in the written information provided to each participant and participants were reminded that they could opt out at any point without explanation at the beginning of each interview (see Participant Information Sheet, Appendix 4).

However, in what Lee (1993) describes as 'depth' interviewing (by which he means unstructured as opposed to survey interviews), there may be additional considerations as "(t)hey may be asked to reveal a great deal about themselves,. Perhaps at some emotional cost (and).. there is no guarantee that informants will realize before an interview begins what they might reveal" (Lee, 1993, p.103). Lee was talking specifically about research into sensitive topics, which might include intrusion into private, stressful or sacred matters or where information revealed might be stigmatising or incriminating, or impinge on political alignments (Lee, 1993, p.4). However, by inviting the participants to reflect on their experiences of age, ageing and church or faith experience I could not rule out the possibility that interviews could trigger some sensitive issues for them. Arrangements were in place for a named contact to be available should they wish to discuss in confidence and without financial cost to them any issues raised for them by participating. In the event none did, although there were examples of some anxiety in interview and one

instance when memories of loss were triggered and recording was stopped until the interviewee felt ready to continue.

There were no colleague or employment relationships between me and the participants and in reality, I had no power to advantage or disadvantage anyone who participated within the organisation of that church. However, there may have been some notional power vested in me by participants who think of the church in hierarchical terms, the clergy being 'above' the laity. In addition, I was aware that some openly referred to me as a 'rescuer' because of the difficult circumstances in which I came into the church and taking responsibility during their vacancy. Although I was reasonably confident that how they viewed me would not affect their responses in interview, I was alert to signs of that possibility when listening to responses and interpreting the data. Occasionally there was reference to my position in a factual way but there was no discernible evidence that this affected how they responded. One or two seemed more intimidated by the fact that I was in the role of an interviewer and expressed some anxiety about getting the words right. There was some evidence of emphasis on past achievements, but that may have been due in part to the recent loss of incumbent in difficult circumstances and a hankering for former days when they felt more energised and their efforts valued.

The decision to tape record each interview was made clear in the information provided. However, use of technology of any kind can be threatening and may be particularly so for older people (Wenger, 2001). In this case, most were intrigued rather than alarmed by the pocket sized digital recorder, although one did express some hesitation about being recorded because she did not feel confident with words. The reassurance of confidentiality and that no-one else would have access to the tapes, together with the provision of a transcript which could be altered if she wished, enabled her to continue. There was potential tension between respect for the anonymity of participants and desire to give voice to people whose voices are often not heard. All participants were given the option of using an assumed name if they wished, but none chose to. No names were attached to any files of transcripts and although initials might have been acceptable, it would be possible to identify individuals in such close contexts by initials. Therefore, each was assigned a number to be used in writing up the research.

In some circumstances age may be indicative of vulnerability, usually because of associated illness such as forms of dementia or physical or sensory infirmity. None of those invited to be participants in this research were affected by illness such as dementia,

where capacity to consent might be compromised, and none was housebound. One participant had asked her daughter to be present because she was keen to take part but nervous about being interviewed and that seemed an entirely appropriate solution. However, I was aware on more than one occasion that an interviewee was becoming tired. Signs included losing the thread of their answer, becoming repetitive, slower in response. Most interviews therefore lasted not longer than 30 minutes, with the exception of those who had key leadership roles in one or more of the activities, when they were closer to 50 minutes.

All but one of the interviews were conducted in the participant's home and about half had prepared with a cup of tea either before or after the interview was completed. There is some evidence that ending interviews can be more difficult with older people, who might like to extend the visit and the opportunity to talk about themselves (Wenger, 2001) by such strategy. In some ways this might have blurred the boundary of interview but would have been discourteous to refuse and as Wenger suggests interviewers should be "prepared to be generous with their time if their respondents have been generous with theirs" (Wenger, 2001, p.275).

Reflection

The choice of methodology was influenced by the importance attached to creating opportunity for voices to be heard. Research into collaborative ministry has not included the perspective of congregations nor the voices of older people. Similarly, although there is a growing body of knowledge and understanding about ministries for older people, which do include some of their stories and experiences as recipients of ministry, there is very little where they speak of the experiences of being the ministers. Therefore, there was objective motivation for research. However, as it was through both witnessing the experience of others and direct personal experience in ministry that the intention to research was formed, I could not exclude the possibility that it was in part influenced by a subjective motivation to give expression to my own voice. By the time the research took place this was further influenced by the fact that I was one who had by then joined the group that bears the label 'older people'.

There have been many times in life and in ministry when I have felt my voice was silent, even silenced, while inside I was shouting. I cannot remove that part of my experience from this research, as if none of that happened or was important, but this cannot be my story alone. As a woman in ministry – and now an older woman in ministry - I am part of a

much bigger story that involves many thousands, millions, of others, men and women, in the call to ministry. Together we become part of God's story and are given voices to speak of him to the world. Together we know some of the challenges to making our voices heard and together we know some of the creative, empowering ways God can use us. And it will not always be by using words. Voice and speaking can also be about action and maybe just about being the people we are. I must be open to these finding a place in the research.

Therefore, although I do want people to hear my story, if the research is to achieve its aims of learning through listening to others, the extent to which I can bring a reflexive approach to the enquiry is crucial. I will be having conversations with myself as well as conversations with others as the research progresses. Conversations will be made up of my thoughts and thoughts of others, internal and external (Ward, 2007, p.78), and also with God. In ministry we meet people in many different ways and circumstances. We might hope that most conversations will have a depth and can take place over time. But perhaps sometimes we do not pause long enough to truly converse with each other, or our conversations are so task-focused that they are little more than a passing hello and goodbye. Yet perhaps even they in a small way become part of our story and God's story. Still others are in encounters that revive forgotten conversations lodged within from the past. These too may find a place in this research, through the purposeful conversations in interviews and listening for the small things, the unsaid things, the jumbled, fumbled words as well as the articulate responses, and will all be part of the learning.

Learning, like reflexivity, is a dynamic, connected process. It is so much more than a looking back on or reviewing something that has already happened. Like the process of determining the conceptual framework, there will be past, present and future dimensions to this. Like the Psalmist in Psalm 71, with the participants, I may discern how God has been part of my learning from early days, and now in ministry empowering me to go on: "until I proclaim your might to all the generations to come" (Psalm 71: 17-18). Exploring the empowering ministries of older people, and how they might be empowered to fulfil them, begins with listening to their voices. Each will have a past, their own stories and experience of where God has been in their lives. Each will have been motivated and sustained in the ministries they have offered and are offering. Each has insights, knowledge and understanding to inform the future.

Chapter 6

Participants in the Research

A case in case study research can be defined as a 'unit of analysis', chosen for its capacity to enable exploration of the research problem or question (Simons, 2009, p.28). The exact scope of this 'bounded system' may be subject to some changes as the research develops and even in the course of analysis (Simons, 2009). The research took place during the time I was Associate Priest in the Church of St David, and was facilitated by the fact that there were some discrete activities that were named ministries in that church, all of which were led and staffed by older people. This was the primary source of data for the research.

Contextual introduction

There was no official profile of the church by age, but using the most recent Electoral Roll and from direct knowledge of the congregation, it could be stated that a little over 70% of its members were aged 60 or over. This would rise to 80% when looking at average attendance at Sunday morning services. Three of the members of its Ministry Team at the time of the research were over 60; myself at 63, a retired priest, then aged 91, who retained Permission to Officiate (PTO) and still preached regularly and a retired Church Army Sister, aged 79, whose ministry mostly was focused on prayer ministry during Sunday services. In addition, much of the church administration was carried out by people over 60, including the treasurer, administrative assistant and former administrator. One of the two Children's Church leaders was aged 63, and perhaps not surprisingly, given the age profile of the church, most of those who assisted in services, led intercessions, read and acted as welcomers were also over 60.

With that level of involvement of older people at St David's it would have been possible to look at the church itself as the case. However, there were three specific activities of the church that could be identified as units of analysis, each led by older people. These were the Lunch Club, a Coffee Shop, and two Housegroups. These were different in focus and content, but all seemed to be regarded in the church as part of its ministry. Therefore they were identified as linked cases for the research. However, many of those who were involved in one or other of these ministries also had roles in the worship and administrative ministry of the church and it seemed right to create opportunity for them to talk more generally about their ministry to get as full a picture as possible. In addition, there were some who were exercising some form of ministry in the worship or administrative life of the church, but who were not involved in the linked cases. Although

not strictly cases, this led to two further areas of ministry, Administration and Worship, being included and an invitation was extended to individuals involved in those areas, who were over 60 and were willing to talk about their experiences of ministry.

Just as my own story is one in its context, so it was for those of St David's who were participants in the research. Therefore, it is important to record some contextual background. St David's began as a small worship group in a local house during the Second World War. At that time, much of the surrounding area was rural agricultural land until fifteen years of post-war developments resulted in about 2,500 homes being built, almost all of which were privately owned. Further development in the 1970s and 80s of another 1,500 homes on what had been farmland on the edge of the parish boundary added some council-owned or housing association property but much of that is now also in private ownership. My home is on that estate. The church itself was built in 1955 and stands in a highly visible location close to local shops, although the entrance which serves both the church and adjoining hall is via the carpark and is not visible from any road. It became an independent parish in December 1972 and has had five male incumbents since then and, at different times, five non-stipendiary ministers serving with them, four of whom were female and for ten years up to 1994 there was also a Deaconess.

The ecclesial tradition at St David's was probably best described as middle Anglican, although over the years it had had some experience of higher traditions. In recent years clergy have encouraged laity to serve in various capacities in the worship life of the church, including roles of Sacristan, Server and Acolytes. In addition four lay people have served as Deacon, one woman now in her late 70s and two men in their 80s. They all were still exercising that role at the time of the research, although for reasons not directly concerning age, subsequently all three have relinquished that responsibility. Many, perhaps most of those over 60 had moved into the area as young families and have remained part of the church and local community for 30-40 years. As a result there was a strong sense of shared history among the congregation giving them a sense of ownership as well as belonging together as church.

The Participants

A total of twenty-one people from St David's agreed to take part in the research (see Table 2 below). Sixteen of them were involved in at least one of the cases and five were individuals, who were not involved in any of the cases, but were exercising ministries of worship and/or administration in the church. None asked for anonymity, but in my recording of their conversations, they were given a number and only I know who they are.

Yet to me they remained people, with names, and can never become just a number. Therefore, I have given each a fictitious name whenever their words are recorded here.

| | Age | Gender | Cases | | | Wider Church Ministry | |
			Lunch Club	Coffee Shop	Housegroup	Administration	Worship
Amy	77	F	✓		✓		
Frances	82	F	✓				
Patricia	63	F				✓	✓
Audrey	71	F	✓	✓			
Hilary	62	F	✓				
Freda	79	F		✓			
Beatrice	82	F	✓	✓			
Sally	79	F					✓
Judith	64	F				✓	
Dorothy	80	F	✓				
Annette	69	F	✓	✓	✓		
Annie	79	F	✓				
Nancy	73	F	✓				
David	82	M	✓				
Eleanor	77	F		✓			
Arthur	91	M					✓
Janet	63	F					✓
Robert	80	M	✓	✓			
Phyllis	84	F	✓				
Jane	69	F	✓				
Gordon	85	M	✓				

Table 2: Participants at St David's, ages and the cases or other ministry they were involved in.

Participants were aged between 62 and 91 (see Diagram 5). Four of them are male and seventeen female. All but one are of white British ethnicity. One comes from an East African heritage.
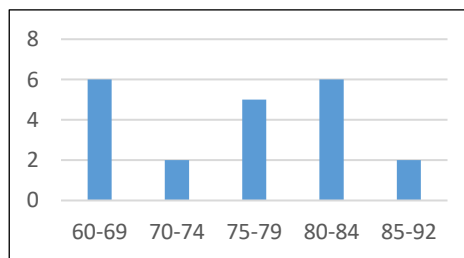
Diagram 5: Age Profile of Participants from St David's

From my knowledge of the church and the people, I also knew that four of the twenty-one participants at St David's were two married couples and seven others had partners who were members of the church. One was a partner in an 'inter-church' marriage. Her husband is Catholic, but worships with her at St David's on alternate Sundays. Two women were married to men who were not part of any church. One was single and six widowed.

The Lunch Club participants

The Lunch Club usually had four teams of four cooks, an administrator (who also offered transport) and a treasurer. There were also four teams of drivers, most of whom were over 60. Initially, the likely numbers suggested group interviews might be appropriate. However, several of those involved in the Lunch Club were also involved in the Coffee Shop, Housegroups or worship and it would have been difficult to give enough scope for them to speak about the range of ministries they had in a group interview.

Invitations to participate in research were given and explained at a Lunch Club planning meeting. Some indicated a preference for being interviewed individually and three opted out of the process; one apologised saying she would like to be involved but thought her husband would not want her to. Another left without comment and the third declined because she is still in her 60s and did not consider herself 'old enough'. Two people were not present at the Lunch Club meeting, one is under 60, and one was away over the interview period. That meant a total of eleven cooks opting in to interview. Three men who are drivers for the Lunch Club also agreed to participate. They all were involved in the worship life of the church: one also ran the Coffee Shop and one had an administrative ministry as church treasurer.

Coffee Shop participants

There were twelve people on the Coffee Shop rota. Three were already being interviewed because of their involvement in Lunch Club. Of the other nine, three agreed to be interviewed, one had a form of dementia and was not approached, one had opted out in the Lunch Club meeting so was not approached again, and another declined the invitation to be involved. Two were not available during the interview period and one was under 60.

Housegroups

The two leaders of Housegroup were already being interviewed; one is involved in all three cases and one also in the Lunch Club.

Other individual participants

Five people not directly involved in any of the three Cases agreed to participate in the research: following individual invitation. These were: two members of the ministry team (my description; it was not a term used in this church), a member of the Children's ministry team, the administrative assistant and former administrator, who also has a role in the worship life of the church.

Participants from All Saints

During interviews an unexpected level of satisfaction about their experience of church seemed to be emerging among the participants from St David's. This led to a decision to extend the boundaries of the research to include interviews with four additional participants at All Saints whose experience had influenced the intention to research. The four additional participants were all members of the Story-sharing Group: one man and three women, aged 76 – 87 (see Table 3). One was married with a partner who was also a member of the church, two were widowed and one was divorced.

	Age	Gender	Story Group	Housegroup	Worship
Henry	86	M	✓		✓
Mollie	87	F	✓		
Yvonne	83	F	✓	✓	
Jill	76	F	✓		

Table 3: Additional participants from All Saints

Reflection

My journey into ministry had taken me into four different parishes, each with their own contextual characteristics, and each had taught me a little more about ministry and the experiences of older people in the church. In each context I had witnessed ministry exercised by older people and wondered how the church would function without them. In each place there had been opportunity to listen to the stories and experiences of others in ministry and I was often encouraged and personally enriched by them. I saw God at work though them. But although I heard people speak of being valued for what they did, they also spoke of their efforts going unacknowledged and even of feeling invisible. In each context there were differences in ecclesial tradition and the extent to which clergy and laity worked together. It raised questions about whether different ecclesial traditions and preferred leadership styles were significant in how these older people experienced ministry. I had witnessed active encouragement and a willingness to embrace the ministry of those who were not ordained, but I also had observed how attitudes towards older people might contribute to them expressing that sense of invisibility.

At St David's, older people were highly visible, at least in the sense that they were in a majority and were exercising a wide range of ministries, including the three discrete activities that were the cases for the research. I had not heard them expressing a sense of being marginalised or of feeling invisible, but could not presume they did not share issues I had identified among older people elsewhere. These were the people, together with just a few at All Saints, with whom I would have purposeful conversations, through interviews,

about life, growing old and ministry. Most at St David's had been together for many years. But they were an ageing group. Some had not long entered what might be called young-older age, but others were moving towards older-old age and more than a third of them were already over 80. Yet despite some having their share of physical challenges of older age, all were actively involved in ministries of various kinds.

Their stories and reflections on these ministries could only ever be a snapshot in time, only ever a "fragment in the narrative" (Anderson, 2001, p.3). I was already aware of some of the life stories and issues some of the participants were facing because I had been a minister in their church for eighteen months by the time the interviews took place. Therefore, although I was expecting to gather new knowledge and information about how they understood their ministries, it was possible I would know more of their stories than they chose to include in interview. I had to be prepared to set aside any pre-knowledge in order to listen to what they chose to share and what it could tell me of them, their ministry and of God at work, And I did expect to see and learn something of God through them, as Swinton suggests a "primary means of our meeting with God is through personal temporal encounters (and) the authenticity of the Church community is a vital starting point for the communication of the gospel to all people" (Swinton, 2000, p.104). Here was a church community and each of these people, uniquely known in every detail to God, had a place in the purposes of the one who called each one of them into ministry.

Themes of transition and connection were again discernible. The long-standing membership of many of the participants in St David's appeared to give them a strong sense of belonging to the church and connection certainly with each other. As older people, they might also have some awareness of transition in age, including perhaps beginning to ask questions about how long they could continue in some forms of ministry. But the church itself was in a period of transition following the sudden departure of their previous incumbent almost a year earlier. And I too was going through a time of transition. In chronological age I had just moved into the 'young-old' group, but in my ministry journey was only just settled into my time at St David's. I had been convinced God had a purpose for me going there and they had made me very welcome. But now, 18 months into my time there, I was already sensing it was likely I would be moving on again within a year. I had a formal connection with the church because of my role, but perhaps could not share their sense of belonging. I had given little thought to that when planning the research because in the early stages I was settled enough and had no reason to expect the changes that overtook all of us. I had given little thought also to the physical reality of my own ageing and chosen not to think too much about signs that I was becoming more

acquainted with the impact of age on life and ministry. I felt the discomfort of being both an insider and outsider, challenged by the possibility that I might hear from them questions that I might be asking of myself in a few short years. I was grateful I had a map by which to negotiate the research. There was a measure of security and confidence in that.

Chapter 7

The Ministry Stories

"Hopefully as it is in a church you hope that they would get the message that it is not just some ladies cooking for them but there is a little bit more behind it ...... It is a labour of love – and it is God's love as well as our love. I think anything you do here in a church is all part of the message that this is God working.

Amy, aged 77, talking about the ministry of the Lunch Club

This chapter begins the recording of the research. St David's provided the context for the three cases in the research and other ministries that some of the older people were exercising there. The ministry stories that were the cases of the Lunch Club, Coffee Shop and Housegroups were told through documentary records, some observation and through interviews with individuals who were part of them.

1.   The Ministry of the Lunch Club

The Lunch Club (also referred to as The Luncheon Club) meets on Thursdays in the Church Hall, during school term-time. A two-course meal is served over a one hour period to up to 35 people. It appears not accidental that it is called a club as there are qualifying criteria to join: people must be over 60 and living on their own in the Parish. As numbers are limited application has to be made to join the Club and on occasions awaiting list has been introduced. There is no joining fee, but at the time of the research members paid £3 for their meal. Some transport is provided by volunteer drivers for those unable to make their own way. Students from the local Secondary School come to help serve the food and clear tables as part of their community involvement curriculum. The Church holds a service of Holy Communion, which precedes the meal but is entirely optional and is not exclusively for Lunch Club.

It is not clear when the Lunch Club started, but reference is made to it being in existence in Parochial Church Council (PCC) minutes of 1974 and 1975. In March 1974, there was a record of the purchase of a new cooker and to a request for volunteers to help with cooking. (PCC 11/3/74) In August the Vicar reported the new cooker had been installed at a cost of £217 and therefore "it was felt that perhaps after the summer the Club could be held on an additional day of the week, possibly staffed by members of other churches" (PCC 9/8/74). Reports on the Lunch Club began to appear in Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) minutes from 1975, but the most significant information seemed to be a record of the numbers of meals served (1,143 in 1975) and the average cost of the meals. At that time accounts had to be kept in order to qualify for a Council subsidy and this

apparently also affected the price that could be charged for meals. At that time also there was some connection with a Day Centre for Disabled people using the church hall but not run by the church. The 1978 APCM report states "during 1977 some 3,543 meals were served at an average cost of 42.5p per meal - The number of meals includes those served at the Day Centre for the Handicapped (sic), which meets … on Wednesdays".

There is little reference to Lunch Club then until 1988, when the Vicar's Report to the APCM stated: "This successful management of the weekly lunch for elderly and retired people has resulted in growing weekly numbers and at the end of the year a very excellent act of worship, lunch and entertainment, which was probably a 'first'". (APCM 10/2/88). This became an annual Christmas Carol Service. After a ten year gap, the 1998 report made the first recorded reference in reports to the purpose of the Club: 'The Lunch Club provides a meal each Thursday to members over the age of 60. Membership is at present limited to those who live alone or have some special need and who either attend (St David's) or live in the Parish. There is a 12 o'clock communion service for anyone who wishes to attend, after which lunch is served at approximately 12.45pm". However, the attention to numbers and costs had not waned. The cost was recorded as £1.20 and in 1997 1,283 lunches were served, a lower number because by now the Day Centre had moved to another location.

From about 2000, the repeated theme changed to concerns about the ageing teams of volunteers. The 2002 report makes the first reference to the teams who are '"no-longer-young ladies". Thanks to volunteers and requests for more helpers became an even stronger theme in reports from 2008 when the loss of some volunteers meant lunches were only provided on a fortnightly basis for a while. The 2011 report referred again (obliquely) to the age of volunteers with "one final note – we would really welcome some offers of help in the kitchen. Some of the cooks have been working in the kitchen for *many* years, and would love to retire" (APCM 2011 *original emphasis*).

Eleven of the women participants in the research were actively involved in running the Lunch Club and as Table 4 below shows, almost half of them had done so for more than 20 years. Three had been involved almost from the beginning and only two had an involvement of less than 5 years. Once involved in this ministry, many have stayed with it, so that in the words of one participant it is the "over 40s then become the over 60s feeding the over 80s!" (Annette, aged 69).

30+ years		20-30 years		10-20 years		5-10 years		Less than 5 years	
Amy	77	Annette	69	Beatrice	82	Audrey	71	Hilary	62
Frances	82	Phyllis	84			Dorothy	80	Jane	69
Nancy	73					Annie	79		

Table 4: Women involved in the Lunch Club, their ages and length of involvement

Most of those involved in the Lunch Club ministry knew little or nothing about its origins but four referred to it having been an initiative of a previous vicar and one that the vicar's wife was instrumental in the early days. Several had become involved as young mothers and in those days generally did not have employment outside the home. The role of the vicar in drawing others in was clear in the words of one of the earliest recruits:

"I really got involved back in the early 70s, when Lunch Club started and that was (the then vicar) who came in one day and asked if I would be interested in helping with a Lunch Club. At that stage I wasn't a regular church goer – I went sometimes. And because (he) got me into the Lunch Club I started thinking about whether we should go to church more often "(Nancy, aged 73).

The change from it being a weekly activity throughout the year to term-time only ministry was a pragmatic response to the availability of the helpers who "found that so difficult with children and then grandchildren to look after" (Nancy, aged 73). Management and organisation also changed from the early involvement of the vicar and his wife, to an appointed leader and then to the present arrangement of teams. Nancy explained:

"Somebody who was qualified in catering got involved and (did) all the shopping and planned what we would do. It is only in recent years that we have run it with each team doing their own thing. …. we have a planning meeting and they each plan their menus and that is how it goes" (Nancy, aged 73).

Transport to and from the Club has become an additional commitment in recent years, due mostly to the decreasing physical mobility of some ageing members. Looking back one said "I don't recall there being a need for drivers – apart from an ambulance that did bring someone" (Amy, aged 77). One of the drivers, with responsibility of organising the rota, himself aged 80, noted except for one who is in their 60s, all the drivers are in their 70s and 80s. As some members "have more difficulty in moving around or getting in to the back seat of a car, … (and) in some cases you have to go to the door and support them on the way there into the car" (Robert, aged 80), he rightly observed this can be described as a ministry of older people to older people.

The ministry purpose

The purpose of the Lunch Club was understood broadly in terms of pastoral ministry and meeting a need in the neighbourhood, although ownership of purpose was located with the vicar who initiated it. Nancy, who had been involved almost since the beginning described it as outreach and was passionate about it being understood as ministry: "Well (Vicar) was very keen for it to be an outreach into the community and I feel it has a real ministry". She went on to speak of an audit of the parish commissioned by a new vicar:

> "At the end of it I think we had a meeting about it and we all felt so cross because they said 'what are you doing serving all these lunches – it is not a social service thing'. They didn't see – we were so cross about that – it really hurt when we had put so much effort into it over the years. We were all *so* cross" (Nancy, aged 73).

Similarly, the reason for involvement of the local Secondary School was not clear, but that too was attributed to the vicar: 'They (the vicar and his wife) used to get the food on and then persuaded children to come down from (M) School to help serve" (Phyllis, aged 84).

Most of those involved pointed to the perceived social needs of older people arising out of loneliness and isolation, so saw it offering companionship, "bring(ing) the older people together so they can have a good natter. It gets them out rather than sitting within four walls" (Audrey, aged 71). But some also spoke of spiritual needs:

> "Well it isn't just a meal - to some people it is a big help. Some like (S) have difficulty cooking anyway and it means a lot to her. But I also think it is the socialising – and the service of Holy Communion – because as people get older you can't always manage the 9.30 and so I think that is a big help to them" (Dorothy, aged 80).

And one identified the potential for nurture and faith development: "It is not just about food, it is about the companionship and I think the fact that it is a gentle way perhaps for some to come back to a faith as well - if they are cared for. People need to feel cherished" (Annette, aged 69).

Observation

I routinely attended the Club and presided at the service that preceded it, which was attended by an average of twelve Lunch Club members. I was encouraged and inspired by the commitment and perseverance of these people in this ministry. But I also sensed and observed their weariness. One had said: "'It is amazing how many people are still doing it and are 'past it' really - shouldn't all be doing it'"(Amy, aged 77).

Despite their concern about having to limit membership numbers due to space and capacity of the cooking teams, actual attendance at the Lunch Club varied between 23 and 31, usually including one or two drivers, so on most weeks there were some empty places at tables. Food was served through a hatch from the kitchen to three pairs of school pupils, who then distributed it. They were then sent to sit in a separate room having their own packed lunches until called to clear the tables and serve the puddings and tea or coffee. Intergenerational conversation and engagement if it happened at all was usually limited to what was necessary for serving the meal.

Tables were set for four round each table and people habitually sat in the same places each week. If one or two were away it could mean one person sat on their own at their usual table rather than join others. Some tables were buzzing with conversation among people who were friends or neighbours, but others had people who have little in common but the meal they were eating and appeared to make little attempt at conversation. On one table a woman of 92 who was deaf and carried a small writing board to communicate, was sat with another in her 80s who had memory problems and would sit in silence unless directly spoken to. One or two of the cooking team usually went round with second helpings, of food but conversation was limited and those who remained in the kitchen seemed to have little or no opportunity of engaging with those who had come to share the meal. However, the one who spoke so passionately about the visitation that criticised it as 'not a social services thing' always made a point of sitting with anyone on their own and I too would make a point of going to each table to chat, or enquire about people who were absent.

Here was a ministry offered and communicated through hosting space to gather with the nourishment of food provided and the lifts to and from home. It had a pastoral heart and I heard confident description of the Club being a place of companionship. It may well be experienced in that way by its members as companionship does not necessarily require movement or noise, but as one participant observed: "I just wish they mingled a bit more … they don't seem to communicate with each other. They sit in groups and don't mix too much" (Jane, aged 69).

2.   The Ministry of the Coffee Shop

The Coffee Shop at St David's operates on Saturday mornings from 10.30 – 12.30 throughout the year. It is managed by one of the participants (Robert, aged 80) with a rota of six pairs of volunteers, all but one of whom is over 60. A 17-year-old son of a church member helps each week as part of working for his Duke of Edinburgh Award.

The first accessible record of the Coffee Shop is in the APCM report in 1990, when the Vicar referred to 'a new initiative' commencing at Easter, to run on Saturday mornings in what was then called the Choir Vestry (now known as the Quiet Room). Its purpose was not spelled out apart from it being described as "another kind of outreach". A year later, its success raised the possibility of expanding times of opening if more volunteers could be found (APCM 1991). By 1994, it was under the leadership of a participant, who described it as 'flourishing', with occasional musical entertainment from one church family and assisting serving refreshments at other events such as Flower Festival. But she had resisted a suggestion of moving it into the small hall to increase space for more tables as it would "entail a large amount of furniture moving (not to be encouraged) and the loss of our 'intimate' atmosphere. (Amy, recorded in APCM 1994). The number of people attending Coffee Shop in those early years of its operation varied from just 3 or 4 to the room being uncomfortably packed. It seems little had changed by 2002 when it was noted:

> "As in the past, I believe the Coffee Shop plays a small but quite significant role in the life of the church. It is a place for meeting friends and making new ones; it is a place for talking freely to people; for taking time to chat; to sometimes talk shop" (APCM 2002).

In 2003, running of the Coffee Shop was handed over to a couple, Robert and Freda, then in their late 60s. In their 2005 report they announced an intention to move into the large hall as a more comfortable and welcoming space. From then on the success of the Coffee Shop was measured by increased numbers of customers who were 'not only members of (St David's) Congregation' (APCM 2008) and in consequence annual increases in the money given to the Treasurer, culminating in 2011 when. It was reported "we have been able to give him £200 more this year than the very good sum we gave him last year" (APCM 2012).

Five of the research participants, four women and one man, were actively involved in the running of the Coffee Shop and two of the women had previously been involved, as is shown in Table 5 below.

Previously involved		10+ years		5-10 years		2-5 years		Less than 2 years	
Amy	77	Robert	80	Annette	69	Audrey	71	Eleanor	77
Annie	79	Freda	79						

Table 5: Participants involved in running the Coffee Shop, ages and length of involvement

Only three people talked about the origins of the Coffee Shop, but with limited knowledge of how it was initiated, other than it being located in the Quiet Room. One of its leaders

knew only that it "was going some years before I took it over (about 10-12 years ago)" (Robert, aged 80). His detailed description of how the tables were laid out in the Quiet Room and the challenges of running backwards and forwards to the kitchen to get water and the crockery partly explained his decision to move it into the large church hall, but he had also observed that it was "so congested that people could not have a private conversation – they came in had a coffee or tea out of obligation almost and then would go" (Robert, aged 80). Despite the move, the need to move tables and chairs and the Coffee Shop equipment and supplies, which remained in a cupboard in the Quiet Room, continued to trouble him as those on the rota are "almost always, in their 70s , so what we can do with is perhaps a younger person to be in each rota" (Robert, aged 80). It seems he had overlooked the weekly presence of the 17-year-old student.

The ministry purpose
The 1997 church APCM report contained the first clear statement of the aims of this project:

> "we do not make vast sums of money but I do not think that is the main objective. We aim to provide a service; a refuge from the week-end chores; a convivial atmosphere in which to meet people; and in this I believe we do at least partially succeed" (APCM 1997).

This was echoed among the participants and two of those who help, including the current leader, were at pains to point out that it was never intended to be fund-raising. "It was just meant to be a service and if we made a profit it was a bonus"(Annette, aged 69). They gave various descriptions of its value as a forum for social contact and opportunity to build relationships. One seemed to see it primarily for the people already in the church:

> "This gives people who come up to do shopping … the opportunity to come in and socialise, to talk and chat and get to know one another on a personal basis because instead of it being just a face in the congregation you can get to know them, as a person" (Robert, aged 80).

Another, who had responsibility for running Coffee Shop previously wanted to emphasise it as having a ministry through outreach to people who may not yet be involved in the church:

> "It is a ministry bringing people into the building and making them aware of what churches do…… It gives chance for casual conversations - and …. it is a way of publicising anything in the church – services., leaflets about what we do – meals and things and encourages people to come. It's a way of publicising the church –

no doubt about it. And we get them in and hopefully keep them" (Amy, aged 77). But then another was less convinced as "so many of the people who go to the Coffee Shop go to the church…. It would be nice to get outsiders, - we do get a few, but on the whole it is the church people all the time" (Audrey, aged 71).

One participant, who was relatively new to the church and to the Coffee Shop team, saw the primary ministry as offering friendship irrespective of church allegiance but also spoke of welcome:

> "I don't think anyone comes in and sits down at their table without any interaction with the other people there. It's a nice feeling of friendship and 'nice to see you' sort of thing… and if anyone different comes in, a stranger comes in, and we try to make them welcome too. Everyone says 'have we seen them before?', 'are they new?' but nobody dare ask! You have to go at it in a roundabout way I suppose" (Eleanor, aged 77).

Observation

It is not clear that Coffee Shop has ever operated as an outreach activity, but seems to have been more a meeting place for people who already know each other. Being tucked away in the Choir Vestry might have been a disadvantage in the beginning, but opened doors that side of the church and tables outside in summer months would have been more visible and accessible than it is in the hall, which has to be reached via the car park entrance and a closed solid wooden door. There are signs outside advertising Coffee, but in a year's experience of being there on almost every Saturday I saw only one casual shopper who called in while waiting for a repair to be completed at a shop across the road. There were some non-church members who regularly attended, including a local councillor, who made it part of his weekly routine for being visible in his constituency and a group of four women who also came to the Lunch Club, and who sat at the same table on both occasions.

As with Lunch Club, tables were generally set out with four chairs, although sometimes another would be added if someone joined a group conversation. But the composition of the group and pattern of attendance, age (most were over 60), seating and time spent there rarely changed. Total numbers varied but were usually between 26 and 40. Attendance generally seemed to be routine with no clear purpose other than catching up with news, or to have a coffee while discussing plans for church social activities. It therefore seemed to be functional and with little impact on the community or beyond the internal life of the church.

On one occasion when a couple from another church came in for the first time, they sat together at an otherwise empty table for over an hour. No-one, other than the person who served their coffee spoke with them, or even appeared to acknowledge them. The couple persisted in attending, and were often the first to arrive and last to leave, always sitting at the same table, but apart from myself, I observed only two other people make an effort to sit with them or speak to them in over six months.

3.   The Ministry of Housegroups

The first recorded reference to housegroups at St David's was in the Vicar's Report in February 1991 when a 'Housegroup Group' had been formed to set up Housegroups for Lent. The Vicar had written an in-house course and trained leaders. The following year it was reported that the groups had continued and flourished with 57 people attending regularly in six groups (APCM 1992). Numbers increased to 70 members of the congregation in seven housegroups and the convenor reported:

> "I remain convinced that the key to our growth as a Christian community is linked to the idea of learning and sharing and praying together in small groups. It is in these small, intimate settings that there is the opportunity to sweep away the more superficial aspects of church going. It is also true to say there is the danger of insularity in small groups but willingness to reconvene and reconstitute the make-up of the groups seems to belie this" (APCM 1993).

Groups continued, with a Bible Study and learning focus, and In 1995 it was decided to commence a full two-year 'Birds Eye view of the Bible' course written by a church member and the groups were reformed each with two newly trained co-leaders. These were regarded as an 'enormous success' and as they continued, study sessions were interspersed by a number of social occasions including walks and meals, to encourage a 'sense of belonging' and fellowship. The groups were able to "provide a setting for people to contribute equally and in their own way to a common objective, at the same time, discovering more about themselves" (APCM 1997).

There was then a change in overall leadership of the Housegroups, and they began following an 'Emmaus starter course' and then embarked on a commitment to what they called 'Emmaus proper' for the next few years (APCM 1999). However, groups were suspended in the autumn of 2000 because the then vicar felt the whole church should have opportunity of following an Emmaus Nurture course. A total of 45 people attended, with numbers fluctuating weekly between 27 and 32. That year the report ended with a

somewhat rueful: "Despite missing the closeness and intimacy of a housegroup it has been good to have time to reflect again on the basis of our faith" (APCM 2000).

Housegroups reconvened in 2001 using 'home grown' courses: the first written by a lay person and then from 2003 others by the new vicar. In 2002 they were described as 'flourishing' with over 50 people in six groups and once again focused on Bible Study. After the loss of two leaders, the groups were again reorganised and formed five groups, with a new course, again written by the vicar. After that APCM reports are silent concerning Housegroups. In July 2009 following another change of vicar, a new Housegroup course was launched, with four groups running, but there is no further reference in public reports and it seems their profile as part of the life of the church virtually disappeared. The minutes of the Mission and Stewardship Committee, of October 2012 noted under AOB, that there were then one Emmaus Group, a 'Day Housegroup' and two evening housegroups, studying Romans, although there is no evidence of them being publicised in any of the church information sheets.

At the time of the research, the church website referred to a Tea and Bible study discussion group with a contact name but no details about when or where it met. An Emmaus Group, again with a contact name but no other details and a Beacon Prayer Group. Beacon groups were introduced by the then vicar in early 2008 initially as Lent Groups. They met once a month for about an hour, to pray for the sick, and the local community. Another group was in existence, which had a social function and chose to call itself the 'Game Birds'. It had no explicit spiritual purpose, although following the illness of one of its members, the group joined in weekly communion services in her home. It is not devoid of spiritual content but it stretches the boundary to include it in the case for the purposes of research.

Eight of the participants had either current or historical involvement in leading or hosting Housegroups, shown in Table 6 below:

Previous lead/host		Current lead/host	
Janet	63	Annette	69
Nancy	73	Amy	77
Gordon	85		
Phyllis	84		
Nancy	73		

Table 6: Housegroup leaders or hosts

There was a sense of lost history in the way some of the participants spoke of housegroups at St David's and regret about the lack of leadership:

"We started up the first ones, and after that it became quite a feature of the

church. It is very different now with one which meets down at (S's home) because that is also a social thing to try and help (her). It is a Bible Study group but we also get to talking about other things which is brilliant" (Nancy, aged 73). The leader that group explained: "Well our group just kept going ... other groups have fallen by the wayside. There are people who want to come - we have a waiting list – people will come but won't lead it" (Annette, aged 69). The group uses material written by Annette, who had studied theology at college before a career as a school teacher. She considered the group stimulating of her own continued learning. The group membership of nine women and one man represent a range of theological and ecclesiological backgrounds and some who are described as 'late to faith'.

The second group, still known as the Emmaus group is hosted by 77-year-old Amy, who insisted she was not its leader. The study input is provided by the church's Lay Reader. They call it an Emmaus group in Amy's words "because we are all on this journey". She also suggested others might want to join if there was space and time: "It's awful in a way because it means we are leaving people out. It has been mooted that (the Lay Reader) would start another when time allows. I am happy to host another if someone else does the work!" (Amy, aged 77). Amy was the only person among the participants to mention the Emmaus Group and none of the other participants attended it.

Observation

It was a surprise to discover this history of Housegroups and also how strongly that history lives in the memory. The existing groups are not publicised so they not only have a smaller numerical presence, they are largely a hidden part of the church life. As one leader explained:

> "well – we just tick along. When we had a look at Mark (the Vicar) announced it in church and then asked people who were interested to stay behind. Some of it was very superficial and I thought some of it wasn't quite accurate and came home and looked it up and we thought that we would go along with it in our group – but do it our way!" (Annette, aged 69).

It sounded strange that both groups operated a waiting list, although understandable perhaps if they are meeting in homes, it created a sense of exclusivity about them. There seemed no ownership or momentum within the church to take this on in the way that there clearly had been in the past, either from the Vicar or in individuals who had the vision and ability to generate and lead enthusiasm for learning together. The surviving groups seemed to have some discernible shared purpose although they were run quite

differently: one retained its identity as a Bible study group (albeit with tea) while the other focused on faith learning and nurture. The existence of the Beacon Group was noted, but its focus on prayer distinguished it from the other two sufficiently for it not to be included as a case.

Reflection

These three examples of ministry at St David's were clearly important to those who were part of them and in different ways an important part of the history and present ministry of the church. Each of the ministry stories as they were told had pastoral and outreach purpose and each expressed something of the ministry of hospitality and food or refreshment as a vehicle for that.

Certainly, one aspect of hospitality is the provision and sharing of food. Food and feeding are well-used Biblical images, often used to represent God's faithfulness, love and provision for his people, through manna in the wilderness (Exodus 15), to Jesus feeding 5,000 (Matthew 14:13-21). There are numerous stories in the life of Jesus centred on food and meals and in parables, especially those that reflect the nature of the Kingdom of God as banquets, where those who exalt themselves will be humbled (Luke 14:7-14), or where welcome is extended to outcasts (Luke 14:15-24), or a celebration homecoming for a repentant son (Luke 15:11-31). These are all also stories of transformation: the lowly lifted, the outcast embraced into belonging and the lost, found. Surely such must be the capacity of true hospitality. But meals are there also there for daily sustenance: at the home of friends (Mark 14:3) and in the intimate fellowship with his disciples for that sacred meal which celebrate as Eucharist or Communion, in which he broke bread as spoke of it as his body (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:12-28). These too are stories of transformation: food is given to meet physical needs of the body, but is a context in which there can be deepening relationship, expression of commitment and spiritual nourishment and growth.

So surely hospitality is more than provision of food. It speaks of welcome and an openness to embrace that has the potential to change lives. It was an imperative in the early church "Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it" (Hebrews 13:2). It is something Jesus looked for among those who profess to follow him, "For I was hungry, and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you invited me into your home" (Matthew 25:35). It can be said to operate at the permeable boundary of church that Heywood

(2011) speaks of, in which hospitality performs a "vital role" in its ministry and mission and provides a "powerful reminder of the importance of table fellowship in the life of Jesus" (Heywood, 2011, p.23). It is a ministry that has been described as "a building block of community", integral to pastoral care (Whipp, 2013).

Hospitality therefore might take us out of our comfort zones but must include willingness to welcome the stranger in a way that may be an invitation to meet with God and have the capacity to nurture and transform. Churches "have an important ministry of hospitality in opening up the resources of a living faith to individuals and families who are negotiating the major transitions of life" (Whipp, 2013, ch.6. Growing Together). As such it clearly has a place in ministry among older people negotiating the transitions of older age. It is also one of the ministries which older people themselves have been found routinely to contribute in churches, along with prayer and care, mentoring and ministry beyond the church by their volunteering and presence in the community (Hawley and Jewell, 2009). There was implicit recognition of this as part of the ministry of the Housegroups and it was there in Amy's hope that the message of God's love at work would be understood and Annette's observation that Lunch Club was "not just about food, it is …. a gentle way perhaps for some to come back to a faith". But it was notable that none of those involved in the Lunch Club, Coffee Shop or Housegroups spoke of welcome, apart from Eleanor, who thought Coffee Shop tried to offer welcome to strangers but people were afraid to ask someone if they were 'new'. Generally, although the intention was there, it seemed they were content to remain within the comfort of their own social groups.

Theologically, such mutual sharing and making room for one another in hospitality has been linked with Trinitarian theology (Whipp, 2013; Migliore, 2004). "The mutual indwelling and hospitality which characterizes the exchange of love within the Trinity spills out through our lives in a gracious embodiment of openness to one another" (Whipp, 2013, ch.7). Although Pickard (2009) argues that there may be echoes of such a Trinitarian understanding in ministry, the unresolved issue of the nature of relationships between ministries in our churches prevents it from being truly collaborative. Nevertheless, it speaks to me of the importance of relationship in this kind of ministry that has a reciprocal dimension: an openness to the other through which they may experience the embrace of God's love, but in which we too might receive something that shapes and even transforms us. Over the years I have experienced and witnessed many examples of hospitality: churches seem to find food the most expedient expression of it. But perhaps I have known it most especially in and through pastoral ministry. I do not think I have ever been unaffected by those encounters with others. Sometimes they have challenged me in

my faith, my theology and my understanding of myself, but also I have often felt unexpectedly enriched by and touched by a meeting with God. Such is the ministry of hospitality that can be as much about being as it is about doing.

Chapter 8

The Research Findings: Re-viewing Ministry

"Working for God.
That's the simplest way of saying it. I can't think of any other way of saying it.
Ministry means doing things for God……. and for the church itself – working for God."
(Amy, aged 77)

This chapter presents findings from the research focused on ministry and experiences of ministry. It concentrates on St David's, but makes some reference to participants from All Saints. St David's is not unique, neither is it necessarily replicable, however, the insights into what ministry is for these people, some of the factors that have brought them into ministry and what has sustained them in the ministries they exercise, will contribute to wider understanding of what empowers or disempowers older people in their ministries. After contextual introduction, the research is presented under three headings: the locus and definition of ministry, motivation into ministry and sustaining in ministry.

Contextual introduction

It was revealing of how much the people at St David's had invested in the ministries explored in the previous chapter, and how important they regarded them in the life of their church. Both the Lunch Club and Coffee Shop had been in existence for many years and several of the people involved in them had been agents in these ministries over long periods of time. They seemed confident in speaking of them as ministry but it was less clear from the way the stories were told and the observation of their practice how far they were fulfilling the ministry purposes they attributed to them. The Lunch Club and Coffee Shop had changed little over the years, except in the people who took lead roles, and in some ways seemed fixed in time. The Housegroups had grown for a while and then it seems became largely invisible, although undoubtedly valued and meeting some needs of those who continued to be involved in them. All had a narrative of outreach and nurture, but seemed in many ways to be quite insular and exclusive.

The interviews provided a vehicle to dig a little deeper to discover more of what ministry meant to them and what had made it possible for them to be involved in the church's ministry. If I had any assumptions about what constituted ministry, I wanted to set them aside in order to hear afresh how they understood it, so began with an open question of what the word ministry meant to them. Some were more comfortable than others with the question and some took a moment to think, echoing a question that had formed in my

mind when I first went into ministry and now was re-emerging: 'Gosh – what *does* ministry mean to me?' (Nancy, aged 73 *original emphasis*).

1.   The locus and definition of ministry

All participants understood the research was focused on ministry exercised within the church and so perhaps not surprisingly some began by explicitly locating their definition within the church and its people: "That's really difficult – one always thinks of ministry as a minister or religious person ministering to their congregation – does it have other meanings?" (Eleanor, aged 77). For one person the link was so strong she felt she had insufficient understanding of church matters to respond at all: "It does not really mean anything in particular to me because I don't really understand the question. I think maybe if I had been going to church for more of my life I might understand the meaning more" (Audrey, aged 71).

However, most spoke in ways that indicated a wide range of activities that they understood to be part of ministry. It was implicit in many of their definitions, especially those that referred generally to helping and relating with people, that several of them would not necessarily confine ministry to church. One spoke specifically of the emphasis of his ministry since retirement having moved from church-based "much more to community-based – to the people who live in our immediate circle and also people I meet casually outside" (Robert, aged 80). Listening to them in interview and sitting with them in transcripts, some keywords emerged as can be seen in Table 7 below. From this it was possible to identify two broad categories of activity that people in this group regarded as ministry. The predominant category which twelve participants identified was to do with relationships, using words such as: relating, helping, working with, and sharing. Another five saw it in terms of function and organisation, referring to church services, administration and personnel. One person's response might have been both: "Well, generally being part of the church – in an active way, not just attending services, but taking an active part in the whole life of the church" (Dorothy, aged 80).

Keywords	Example	Participant	Focus	Agent
Working with (people)	working with and working for others	Janet	Relationship	Self
	working with people I suppose	Gordon	Relationship	Self
Helping	just in essence helping other people	Judith	Relationship	Self
	serving and helping people	Beatrice	Relationship	Self
	helping people with whom you are associated guiding them in a reasonable way	Robert	Relationship	Self
	somebody who gives to people, whether it is financially, help with something to talk over – just helping	Jane	Relationship	Other
	doing whatever you think would help somebody else	Nancy	Relationship	Self
Sharing	share what you can offer	Annette	Relationship	Self
Relating	well I like to welcome people, to build relationships	Freda	Relationship	Self
	relating to other people, recognising their needs, trying to do what you can to help	Annie	Relationship	Self
	talking to people, or liaising – being there	Patricia	Relationship	Self
	.. a personal relationship with (God). A ministry to .. all one comes into contact with	Arthur	Relationship	Self
Action	it's more than attending services – being actively involved in the life of the church	Dorothy	Action	Self
Administration	the getting together and managing the administration part of the church	Hilary	Organisation	Other
Personnel	a minister or a religious person – ministering to their congregation	Eleanor	Organisation	Other
	I have always thought that ministry revolved around the ministry team	David	Organisation	Team
Function	my ministry was rural ministry to Holloway, (now) the prayer and healing ministry	Sally	Organisation	Self
	it's to do with the church, the services	Frances	Organisation	Other
God	working for/ doing things for God	Amy	God	Self
Nothing	it does not really mean anything particular to me	Audrey		

Table 7: Keywords and themes emerging from how people at St David's described ministry. (One participants chose not to add anything to the definition her husband gave in joint interview).

The overall profile was clearly weighted towards relational forms of ministry as is illustrated in Diagram 6 below. Further, it seemed clear from the way their responses were phrased that of those who saw ministry in such relational terms, all but one saw themselves as its agent. By contrast only two of the five who thought of ministry in terms of the organisation and structure of the church seemed to consider they had an active role in ministry as they saw it. The one person who saw ministry in relational terms but did not explicitly refer to herself spoke of "somebody who gives to people…just helping" (Jane, aged 69). Jane was the only participant who was not a member of the church. She wanted that to be made clear and stated also that she did not have any religious beliefs.
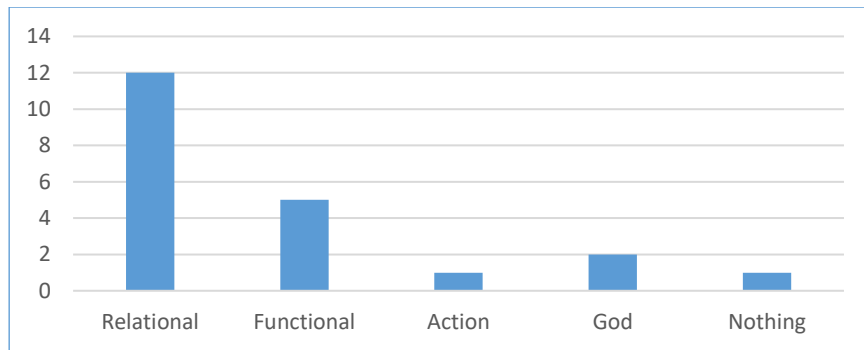
Diagram 6: Pattern of themes in definition of ministry among St David's participants

The retired priest gave what sounded like a more professional answer:

> "The term means to have faith in and knowledge of God and a personal relationship with him, though not restricted by that. It's a ministry to the health and wealth of all people one comes into contact with whether in the church or in the community" (Arthur, aged 91).

But one lay person gave a very detailed response, which seemed closest of all responses to touch on issues of collaborative ministry, so is recorded in full.

> "That's a difficult one to start with - because I have always thought that ministry revolved around the ministry team. So you've got the vicar, the curate, yourself as priest, (Reader), people like that. I always thought it revolved round that little circle. Then all of us in the congregation, the parish, worked with you – not around you, but with you - doing our own specialities, our own things. That's how I always thought of it"

When asked if that meant ministry is only exercised by people in those official roles, he continued:

> "No – not now I wouldn't. Not perhaps for the last 10 years maybe – as things have changed. Now, from my experience that meant leading and being part of it – and I agreed to lead one of those (Beacon group) teams and I enjoyed it. (Later) I was asked if I was happy to continue and to lead (Sunday Evening Prayer), which I did. And I continued it even once we got a new vicar, until such time as (Vicar) just dropped it altogether ...... So things like that become part of that ministry complex, but to me that is relatively new" (David, aged 82).

His understanding of ministry recognised changing patterns of ministry in recent years that involved laity and ordained working together in what he discerned to be a different way. His use of the phrase 'ministry complex' stood out and suggested a much greater sense of connectivity. But it was notable that some of his own role and ministry was dependent on the vicar's initiative and was vulnerable to another's decision to end it. So

perhaps this was an example of shared or enabled ministry, but lacked the devolved responsibility that some argue characterises true collaborative ministry.

The primary cases of research were in the specific identified ministries of Lunch Club, Coffee Shop and Housegroups at St David's, but when the additional participants from All Saints were later invited to respond to the same question, the balance of how they spoke of ministry was similar: three of the four spoke in relational terms, using words like helping, listening, visiting, and "helping, like a father perhaps to their children" (Mollie, aged 87). However, only one, who happened to be the youngest of the four, spoke in a way that implied they saw themselves as the agent. The one person who thought of it in terms of organisation linked ministry with personnel, "whether it's to become a vicar or whatever – and go from there" (Henry, aged 86).

What was most noticeable however, was that only one person, apart from the retired priest, from either St David's or All Saints, mentioned God: "Working for God. That's the simplest way of saying it. I can't think of any other way of saying it. Ministry means doing things for God……. and for the church itself – working for God." (Amy, aged 77). This is something to which I return later in Chapter 11.

The scope of ministry at St David's

Having defined ministry in whatever way they felt made sense to them, the people of St David's were invited to list those ministries that had been part of their experience in the church. A wide range and types of ministry, past and current were listed (see Table 8 below). These could be grouped into five areas of ministry in church life and various forms of ministry within each area:

- Pastoral care - including, visiting, baptism support, bereavement care, prayer and healing ministry.
- Worship – including, leading, preaching and assisting roles in services, intercessions, reading, welcoming, Sunday School.
- Group activities – including, Lunch Club (cooking, transport and administration), Coffee Shop and Housegroups, social and prayer groups.
- Church management – including church and hall administration, PCC and other committees and deanery and ecumenical links.
- Practical help and support – including, cleaning, arranging flowers, seasonal activities and charitable events.

I had not intended to limit ministry to a list of activities, but generally that was how most of the people of St David's talked about it. Few spoke of ministry in more spiritual terms, most notably Amy, when she spoke of the Lunch Club as "being a support and serving

people but not just with food but with – what's the word – presence? – just being there for people" (Amy aged 77).

Older people at St David's were involved across all areas of ministry in the church. Forms of pastoral ministry were mentioned least and seemed to have been stronger in the past. The most frequently mentioned area was group activities, which included the three Cases. This was followed by involvement in various aspects of Worship (13), Management (8) and practical support (7). Most of them were engaged in more than one area of ministry and several in more than one form of ministry within those areas of involvement. Twelve of the twenty-one were engaged in two areas of ministry, three in three areas and one in all five.

Participant	Age	Area of Ministry									
		Pastoral		Worship		Groups		Management		Practical	
Amy	77	■	□	■		■	□	■	□	■	□
Frances	82					■				■	
Patricia	63			■				■	□		
Audrey	71					■				■	□
Hilary	62	■				■					
Freda	79			■		■					
Beatrice	82			■		■					
Sally	79	■	□	■							
Judith	64							■			
Dorothy	80		□		▨	■				■	□
Annette	69					■		■			
Annie	79		□	■			□		□	■	
Nancy	73					■	□	■			
David	82			■			□				
Eleanor	77			■		■				■	
Arthur	91			■							
Janet	63			■			□	■		■	
Robert	80			■		■		■			
Phyllis	84			■		■					
Jane	69					■					
Gordon	85			■	▨	■					

Table 8: Acitivites listed as ministry by paricipants at St David's
■ Current ministry   □ Previous ministry

Since there is emerging attention to division within the older age-group into 'young' or 'new' old and 'older old', it was worth looking to see if the spread of ministry as they identified it, was reflected across the two age-groups: those under 75, of whom there were eight, and those over 76, of whom there were 13. Diagram 7 shows the spread of involvement across these two age groups. In both age-groups, the highest involvement was in group activities, but even taking into account the difference in numbers in each

age-group, the 'older-old' were more heavily involved in the worship life of the church, while the 'younger-old' were more active in its management.
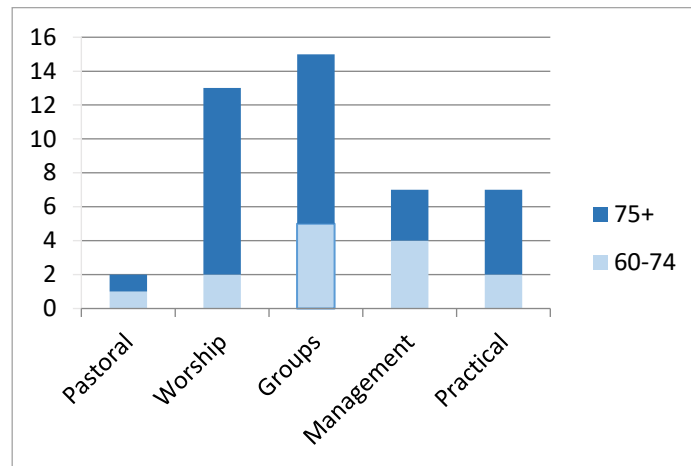
Diagram 7: Ministries identified at St David's by participant age groups

The same question was put to the much smaller group from All Saints and it was noticeable that they were much less involved across the range of ministries compared with those at St David's. None mentioned involvement in church management (at that time no-one in any of the key management or administrative roles was over 60), practical help and support or in worship, apart from Henry who operated the sound system at the first service. All were members of the Story-sharing Group and Jill was its leader. Jill was also involved in pastoral care and visiting, and as a member of the hospitality team for the midweek children and family 'messy church' service. Yvonne had previously been involved in Sunday School and the long-since disbanded choir, but had for some time been a leader of a midweek afternoon Cell Group (similar to the Housegroup at St David's), which she described as "unique because we meet at the church (on an) afternoon, therefore it is mainly elderly women which is a bit sad in a way – I think it would be better to have men and women – but that doesn't happen" (Yvonne, aged 83).

2.   Motivation into ministry

An aim of the research was to discover what had influenced engagement with ministries to see if that gave any clues about empowerment. However, it was a deliberate choice not to use the word empowered or empowerment in prompt and instead phrases such as 'brought you into this ministry' or 'how was it that you became involved', were used. A wide range of motivating factors were identified. Inevitably some people identified more than one influence, as Diagram 8 shows, but there were four main influences: approaches by others, perceived need, background example and a sense of calling. Factors that had

encouraged them to act on these influences included a desire to use their skills in church, wanting to feel more part of the church or having a sense of purpose.
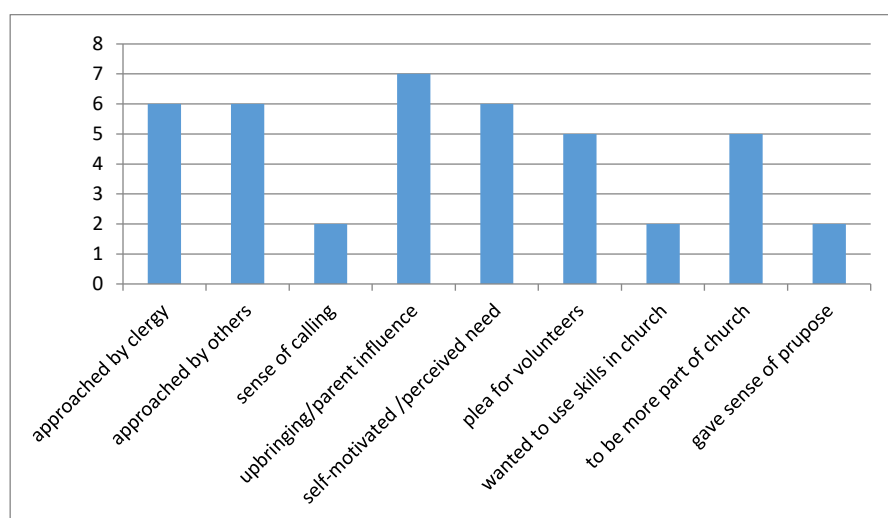
Diagram 8: Reasons given by St David's participants for becoming involved in ministry

Approaches from clergy or others already involved in ministry

Clergy played an important part in encouraging some people into ministry, including some examples dating back nearly 40 years. For one person clergy had been role models awakening an interest in ministry, which later led her into an authorised ministry: "The vicar… (and) a priest from (a) Religious Order from London – I was quite impressed with him and had conversations with him. Between them they helped me along, my journey" (Sally, aged 79). But there were several examples of clergy directly intervening to offer encouragement and building confidence to become involved in areas of lay ministry, which seemed to have some of the characteristics of empowerment:

> "We had this curate and when we were in a vacancy he said 'you can be a deacon' and I said 'no – I don't think so'. I thought he meant take some exams and things and I said no – I'm not academic! And then he explained it all about serving at the altar. And he was a wonderful man – and he really showed me that it was something that I could do" (Amy, aged 77).

Personal invitations from others who were already involved in one of the group activities was particularly relevant to those who worked in the Lunch Club or Coffee Shop. In most cases this was another member of the congregation, but because of involvement from an early stage, for Nancy, referred to previously in this role, it was by clergy invitation:

> "I really got involved back in the early 70s, when Lunch Club started and that was (Vicar) who started it. He dragged me in – no he didn't drag me in - he found me in

the kitchen one day and asked if I would be interested in helping"

(Nancy, aged 73).

Perceived or advertised need

Several of the participants had become involved in ministry in response to a perceived or advertised need and were motivated by feeling needed or wanted. Some were looking for an area of ministry that fitted the skills they knew they had: for example: " I think I just kept seeing the help notices every Sunday (Lunch Club) – and kept thinking perhaps it is talking to me" (Annette, aged 69).

> "They asked for volunteers to do various things and I'm not really very good with people and I hadn't been to church for 12 years – so I thought I am not very good with talking about my faith and that sort of thing, I can't do flowers and I can't sing – and I'm not good with children but they asked for some admin. So I said I could do some admin" (Patricia, aged 63).

Some could articulate something further about what they thought they could gain for themselves by becoming involved in ministry, both in practical ways and in spiritual experience. For example:

> "I think there was a list of things - and I don't know why, but the serving just seemed to 'ring a bell' And I like to feel that it helps in the leading of worship – that to me is reverence. Yes I do think that's an important part of ministry – especially the reverence of it" (Beatrice, aged 82).

However, another saw it as providing an opportunity for practical involvement that she felt did not test her confidence about being 'in public', by which it seemed she meant doing something at the front during church services, such as reading or prayers:

> "I just felt I wanted to do something useful in the church. I am not very much on the side of doing things in public – I get a bit nervous about things like that ... I guess I wanted to do something more practical" (Phyllis, aged 84)**.**

Phyllis's husband who shared the interview noted with some emotion:

> "For many years… I don't think it's ever been fully acknowledged, but for many years the things I was doing I could only do because (Phyllis) was at home looking after this end of things and I don't think enough recognisance has been paid to that. There's no way I could have done those things without her" (Gordon, aged 85).

Phyllis's care for the home and family had played a vital role in enabling Gordon to do

what he had done and his observation raised an important point about the quiet, less public ministry of enabling others.

Parental influence and upbringing

Some participants had no hesitation in pointing to the influence of their upbringing and early life influences of family and church. In particular, the example of parental involvement in the life of the church was regarded as a strong influence: "well I was brought up by very devoted Christian parents… and therefore my ministry has been brought about by my background" (Hilary, aged 62). This was especially where they were taken along as children to join in church activities, something that brought memories flooding back from my own experience:

> "well I was brought up in a very Methodist family…. I just grew up with either my mother or grandmother taking me to whatever was going on at the time from being a little one… We used to do the 'old dears' teas' and I would be about five and was giving cake and a sandwiches at the over 60s – you were old at 60 in those days" (Judith, aged 64).

For one person the influence of parental involvement was linked to the ecclesial tradition in which they were brought up and she extended her thinking about that to the different context in which she was now ministering:

> "my parents were kind of just involved in church – did a lot – it was what you did….and of course being free church, lay ministry is built into the system. There isn't this hierarchy (so) I suppose when you move into a structured church you don't adopt this subservient role. So if you were brought up in the Free Church I guess lay ministry was fairly embedded, so that probably is part of how you become involved. So when you move into a church you do things" (Janet, aged 63).

A sense of 'calling'.

Two people spoke of ministry as a response to a calling. One the retired priest had no hesitation to speak of it in those terms, but gave the credit to another:

> "I came into the professional ministry because the curate of our parish church who has been a life-long friend said to me one day 'God is calling you into the ministry'. And I said –'well that is a surprise to me because he hasn't told me that!'….So it was because someone else thought I had a calling" (Arthur, aged 91).

The other was a lay person, who was much more reluctant to claim a sense of calling:

> " I just feel that it's my – erm – it sounds a big headed to say that it was a calling. Other people may not feel it is like that, but I felt like that anyway: not

through any big headedness, or because I am getting some kind of glory from it because I hate that sort of thing" (Annie, aged 79).

3.   Sustaining in ministry

As in the previous section, the word empowerment was avoided in the prompt questions, but instead phrases like, 'what has kept you involved' or 'what has sustained or enabled you to stay in this ministry' were used. Many of the factors that had been identified as influences or motivation to take up some form of ministry were also identified as things that sustained them in their ministries as is shown in Diagram 9.
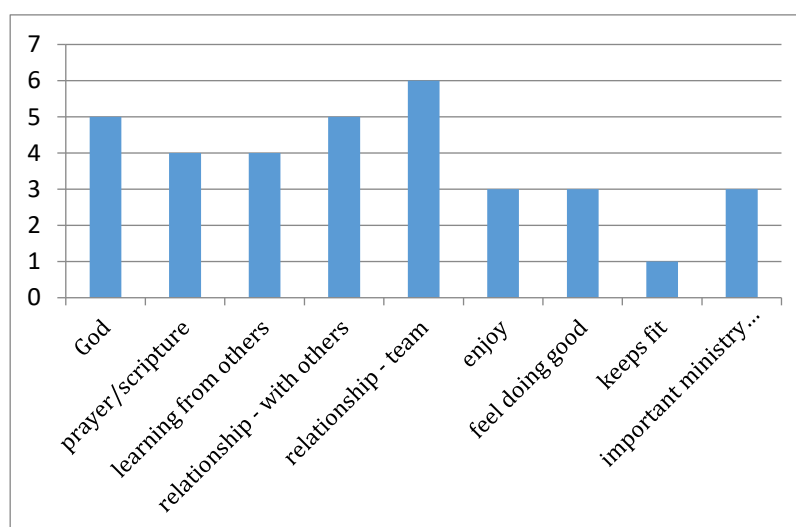
Diagram 9: What people at St David's considered had sustained them in their ministries

Sustained by relationships

The most cited factor concerned some aspect of relationship, either with those to whom they were ministering or between ministers or members of the teams. Some spoke of what they learned from those among whom they ministered, for example: "Children –... I always think children's ministry is about you looking at whatever you are doing with them more carefully and from a different direction" (Janet, aged 63). But otherwise this was especially the case for those involved in the Lunch Club and Coffee Shop. Here there was a strong sense of being sustained because the ministry they offer is valued by those who come: "Well, I think I like to see the people coming in, especially those who have difficulty walking and people in a wheelchair, who I have known for so many years, and seeing them come in and enjoy it" (Dorothy, aged 80). For another the sense that the ministry was meeting a need was compelling: "It is nice to see you are filling somebody's need. It is a very important ministry I should hate to see it collapse – that's why we all struggle on doing it'" (Amy, aged 77).

However, there was also acknowledgement of what they gained by being part of a team, especially among those who were part of the Lunch Club: "being very selfish I enjoy the chat with the team... and laughs – because we are a very lively team. I just enjoy being part of it" (Dorothy, aged 80). Sometimes that was combined with practical gains: "I think because I try to keep as fit and active as I can – (and it) brings you socially with other people" (Beatrice, aged 82).

For others, who spoke in more general terms, the gains were more to do with filling an inner gap in their lives:

> "I enjoy all the things that we do – and what it does is it's meant that we have a wider family of people. We have one son and three granddaughters who we don't see as often as we would like - and we were only children and both sets of parents died – we don't have any close people around us – so our nearest close people are our church" (Robert, aged 80).

For one person this was described more as a sense of belonging: "We always thought this is *our Parish* and we're not going…**...** plus the company of course and the friendship of the people around us. All of that is important. That is what has sustained us - this is us, this is *our* Parish" (David, aged 82, *original emphasis*).

Sustained by spiritual experience

There was evidence of willingness to include more reference to spiritual experiences and to God when reflecting on what had sustained hem in their ministries. For one person, this was an obvious conclusion: "Well I suppose there's only one answer to that – God must have done" (Dorothy, aged 80).

Another spoke of spiritual influence more descriptively and with considerable emotion:

> "Sometimes – not every time – sometimes when I am doing the Taize service, or the communion, it sounds really strange, but I get a sort of inner glow. It starts just here (points just below her neck) and flows down my arms and it is weird... I wish it happened every time really, but it doesn't. It happens when you are least expecting it" (Patricia, aged 63).

Once again, the retired priest was able to articulate how he had developed a strategy to ensure his own ministry was sustained both practically and spiritually:

> "So I made sure that I developed my own spiritual life and development and I made sure that I had time and energy to do the same for other people. So irrespective of what else was happening I made sure I read every day and that I

had time for prayer every day, that I had time for physical exercise every day, and that I had time for my family" (Arthur, aged 91).

Compelled to continue

Although there was evidence of being sustained in ministries by the value attributed to them: "because I think it is important that these things happen and if nobody offers to help they would fall by the wayside." (Annette, aged 69), for others what kept them going sounded more like obligation than positive choice: "I suppose because I started doing it and I know they are short of people so I keep doing it" (Audrey, aged 71). Others were convinced there was no-one to take their place: "sustained? Well I think probably because there's nobody else willing to do it to be honest" (Gordon, aged 85). However, it was difficult to decide how much this was an objective assessment and how much it was shaped by the extent to which these ministries had become part of their lives that in truth they were reluctant to let go.

Participants from All Saints

When the four at All Saints were invited to reflect on the same questions their responses were similar to those from St David's. They mentioned the influence of parents, responding to advertised need and personal invitation as motivating factors. Sustaining factors were the pragmatic "as long as I can do it I will" (Henry, aged 86) and "I'm the sort of person that thinks if you belong to something I think you have to keep at it – you don't pick and choose! (Yvonne, aged 83). However, for Jill it was an acquired passion for the pastoral work "well I am just really so fond of them all!" (Jill, aged 76). But there was evidence also of a spiritual dimension when she added, "and my prayers of course". Yvonne was the only one in All Saints explicitly to mention God: "the fact that I know that God is there each time – whatever it is God is there" (Yvonne, aged 83).

It was interesting to note that Mollie, a key member of the Story-sharing Group from its beginning and a strong advocate of its ministry, nevertheless struggled to identify how she had become involved or sustained in ministry and spoke in the past tense: "Well no – I was part of the congregation and if anything needed doing and I was asked I would do it. But I don't feel I have that much to offer really" (Mollie, aged 87).

Reflection

Hearing these stories of people who had dedicated so much time and energy to serving in the church, was evocative of my own early experiences surrounded by family members who occupied a wide range of leadership roles in the church, such that I often felt the church took the place of family. All of them took their ministries seriously and regarded them as a way of life, dutifully exercised. Without denying what they did as Christians in the world, I would have to acknowledge that it was deeply embedded in the life of the church and expectation of church membership. I witnessed ministry exercised by grandparents, parents and later, siblings, most in lay capacities. My mother and grandmother both gave up employment on marriage, not unusual for their generations, but were fully occupied with church women's meetings, sewing groups, Sunday School teaching, missionary teas and pastoral visiting. There was a lot of 'doing for the church' and I assume they thought of it as 'doing for God', but church and ministry were not matters of choice within the culture of my childhood.

As an adult, church and ministry had to be combined with single-motherhood, secular employment and career. If I questioned whether I was doing enough in the church, I was encouraged by my then Minister to consider if ministry also might be exercised outside the walls of church and might even be in the care and nurture of children, or in being in a caring profession. As a result, I vacillated between a definition of ministry broad enough to include anything a Christian does in any part of their life, and a narrow one of work that is carried out by people who have some formal accredited or authorised role within the church. Later, it was an issue I had to face as a Lay Minister with responsibility for the pastoral ministry of a church. When given the task of forming a Pastoral Team, I was challenged to distinguish what was different about the ministry exercised by people in the team and what others did as part of their daily Christian living. The answer seemed to fall somewhere in authorisation and accountability. Actions that were carried out by people on behalf of, or as representatives of, the church were ministry for which they were accountable to the church and what is done in day to day lives was simply the ministry of being Christian, for which there was no formal accountability, except for the accountability we each have before God. Such distinctions did not seem to trouble those involved in the three ministry cases at St David's.

Although I had anticipated some of the stories might resonate with mine, it was early family and church experiences that echoed most strongly. There were links with what I had witnessed as ministry in others in my early years and what had influenced my own ministry journey. This was especially true of those who were my contemporaries; Janet,

Judith, and Hilary, all of whom had referred to the influence of family and church experiences as children. But perhaps these were stories of our time and might be quite different in our children's generation. Janet, Hilary and I all had held senior positions in our chosen professions, but that was not so for most of those women in the 'older-old' age-group. Some of them had worked outside the home, but most had not, and in many ways the ministries they were offering in the church mirrored the roles they had occupied in the home. Here might be another generational difference that might affect the kinds of ministry we choose to exercise.

It was particularly noticeable that there was a general absence of talk of God among these ministers, although that did grow a little as we explored what had brought people into ministry and what had sustained them in it. Similarly, it was no surprise to hear the retired priest speak of a calling to ministry, albeit via a human intermediary. But it was clear that the only other person to use the word felt reticent to do so. Perhaps this also was of its time. Annie's sense of calling was to a ministry of helping and she felt that was being fulfilled in the ministries she had undertaken, most specifically as it was now expressed in the Lunch Club. But she, like many of these people would have grown up associating ministry with ordination and a call therefore to be to the ordained ministry. When my colleagues were told I was leaving 'to go into the ministry', only 13 years ago, most assumed it was to the ordained ministry. I heard myself explain it was 'only' lay ministry, but an equally valid form of ministry, while inwardly feeling that it was somehow inferior. Yet there is nothing to show Jesus made a hierarchical distinction between ministries and his teaching and example was in terms of servanthood, (John 13:1-17). The New Testament account of the ministry of Jesus includes the work and support of many volunteers, not least the disciples, but also women who supported them from their own means (Luke 8:1-3) or gave hospitality (Luke 10: 38-41. Ministry in the early church was of the whole church, according to the gifts given to each, and where leaders were appointed, it was their role and responsibility to equip all Christians for their works of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12).

That leadership role of equipping others in ministry was the intention behind the development of the Ministry Team in All Saints. The roles we had were described as for empowerment, but enabling, encouraging or equipping could have been substitute terms. However, while some at St David's had been encouraged into ministry by previous clergy there was little contemporary evidence of connectedness with church leaders for it to be said there was a dynamic of empowerment in such relationships. Their sense of being sustained mostly came from intra team relationships or from those who they were

ministering to. A few spoke of spiritual experiences or relationship with God. For those who were among the 'older-old' there was some indications this sense of being sustained in whatever way was weakening and it raises both connectedness and sensitivity to people negotiating life transitions and transitions in forms of ministry most appropriate for them, when looking for their empowerment.

Chapter 9

The Research Findings: Growing Older in Ministry

"It is no good moaning that we are all getting older – of course we are.
But old people have experience – they have things they can do."
(Arthur, aged 91)

This chapter focuses on the research conversations with participants at both St David's and All Saints concerning issue of age and ageing. This included exploring with them if and how they considered their ministries had changed as they got older. The research is presented under three headings: experiences of age and ageing, being older in the church and being older in ministry. These all relate to whether older people might feel empowered or disempowered in ministry.

Contextual introduction

The congregation at St David's composed predominantly people over the age of 60, and many were in their 70s and 80s. The number of families in the church community was relatively small and the presence of more than five children at a Sunday service was a noteworthy event. This was in direct contrast to their shared memory of the energy and life of times past, when many of them would have been the young families. There was a mid-week service which followed the traditional Book of Common Prayer service preceding the Lunch Club and attended solely by older people. At All Saints the age profile was noticeably different and there were two distinct Sunday services and congregations. The first service was small and almost always exclusively people over 60, if not 70. The later service was populated largely by people under 65, including several families with infants, children and teenagers. There was a mid- week informal service with craft and refreshments, known as WoW (Worship on Wednesdays) for young families, that took place after school in school term-time.

Many of those at St David's had had, and continued to have, significant roles and responsibilities not only in leadership of the ministries of Lunch Club, Coffee Shop and Housegroups, but also in the management, administration and worship life of the church. In general change did not seem to be part of the vocabulary of ministry, at least insofar as their ministries were concerned: "so long as the thing is self- sufficient and self-supporting, I see no reason to do anything other than that", Robert had said of the Coffee Shop, and "we just tick along", Annette had said of Housegroups. However, one did speak in more general terms of a need for change: "I get to think I'm getting a bit older and there

are some people younger there - younger than us anyway - so the torch will be carried. I think the church has got to change but I'm not quite sure how" (Gordon, aged 85). And another spoke insightfully of how the idea of change can be a challenge for older people:

> "The older people *can* make the younger people feel welcome but you do need the younger people not to ride roughshod over the experience of older people if they do it 'their way'. Because I do think as you get older, it's a bit like the 'nun's prayer' you get a bit hidebound and that's not always easy to listen to. You have your way of doing things and I think that's a challenge for older people to always think there is one way of doing it - and change can be very difficult – it can also be good"   (Annette, aged 69 *original emphasis*).

However, in the context of a church in which the age-profile of its congregation has changed significantly over the last ten years, the reality of change was something the older people of All Saints noted with a hint of resignation: "I think us older people must realise that change has to come because that's how life goes on" (Mollie, aged 87). However hard they found it, they also saw the future of the church in younger people required their acceptance:

> "I find change difficult to cope with. Some of the things that come up particularly in my church are things that I personally could do without. But on the other hand it is bringing younger people into the church – so it has obviously got to be a good thing. But it isn't a thing that I always like" (Yvonne, aged 83).

1.   Experiences of becoming older

The participants from both St David's and All Saints spoke of experiences they associated with age and growing older for themselves and as they observed it in others among whom they were ministering. These are illustrated in Diagram 10 below. Most of the issues were described in negative ways, such as loss of physical health and well-being, isolation or exclusion and having to let go of doing some things. These were all familiar and well-known issues and have been considered earlier in Chapter 3. However, there were also some more positive experiences and qualities identified, which they saw as enabling them to remain an active resource to the church.
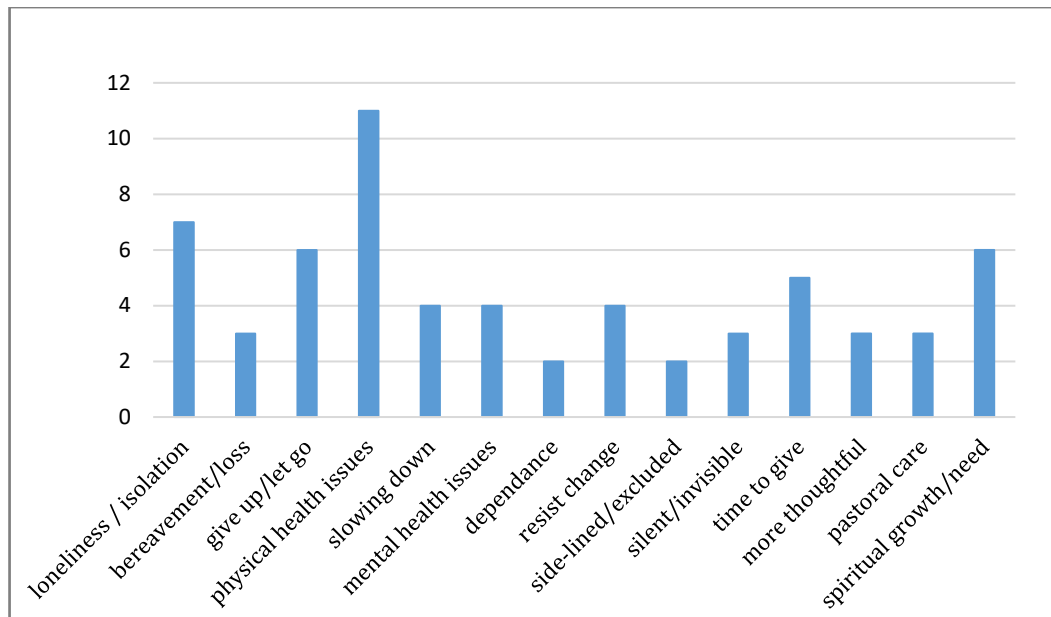
Diagram 10: Some experiences associated with becoming older

Loneliness and isolation

Seven of the participants identified isolation and loneliness as one of the realities of older age, although generally they did so by referring to other people rather than their own experience. Three others linked this with greater experience of bereavement and suggested the church had a role in meeting these needs as a place where people who are lonely or bereaved would find friendship and comfort. "Maybe you *need* church a bit more as you get older" (Eleanor, aged 77 *original emphasis*) and, Jane, who had no religious affiliation herself suggested "a lot of older people turn more and more to the church when they lose a spouse. I think it makes people become a little more religious once a spouse has gone" (Jane, aged 69).

Some, notably those who were involved in the Lunch Club and Housegroups at St David's, wanted to emphasise that age can affect mobility to the extent that some people find it difficult to go out from their homes and therefore can easily become isolated. For that reason, one of the Housegroups had met in the home of one member whose mobility was particularly poor. They wanted her to be included, and they also greatly enjoyed her ministry of cakes. But one person suggested diminished mobility can cause some people to be both overlooked and even forgotten:

> "Without putting names to one side or the other - I think as older people become less regular at church, then visiting them in their homes becomes more and more important and over the years and perhaps that has been an element that has been lacking – in a word we forget them" (David, aged 82).

Physical and mental health

Perhaps not surprisingly, physical changes were among the most readily identified issues associated with growing older. These included physical weakening, "physically I don't feel able to do so much - I am slowing down" (Sally, aged 79) and, when talking about the difficulties of using the church hoover, Audrey said: "when you are younger it's no problem, but as you get older things seem heavier, and that has played on my mind a bit" (Audrey, aged 71). Sometimes the challenge of coping with associated health problems meant withdrawing from some activities: "I have had to stop doing some things because I have to be careful with lifting and carrying things because of sciatica – that sounds really old, doesn't it!" (Dorothy, aged 80). But there was also a determination to keep going regardless: "I come home and I am in a state of collapse almost afterwards – I sit and go to sleep and put my feet up. But it doesn't kill me so I might as well keep on doing it!" (Annette aged 69). For others it was more the frustration of bring hindered by the time consuming consequences of coping with ill health or physical deterioration: "as I've got older I find I can't do the things I used to – yes exactly – these last two or three years I've had quite a time with these legs, hospital appointments and one thing and another" (Henry, aged 86). There was also some acknowledgement of sensory losses, such as hearing loss, which might leave people feeling isolated or having difficulty joining in:" I don't have a problem but one or two people say they didn't hear this or that and you have to fill in at the end of the service and tell them what they have missed" (Yvonne, aged 83).

These kinds of physical changes can be difficult to accept and adjust to, as some readily acknowledged: "I find the physical side of it much more tiring …. and I am probably going to find it harder and harder to admit I can't do things." (Amy, aged 77). Or as Mollie at All Saints, put it more graphically:

> "I find most people my age don't want to be a burden to anybody. I say older people, but I don't want to put myself in that category - but I am! I am 87, but up here (touching her head) I'm not. I feel as young as I was in my 20s. I watch tennis or hockey and think 'oh I could do that!' – but of course I can't – but up here I can!" (Mollie, aged 87).

References to issues associated with mental health were generally hidden in concerns one or two expressed for other individuals, assuming I would be aware of their circumstances. None known to be affected by mental health problems or issues such as dementia were included as research participants, but one participant observed of others:

> "It is difficult to generalise of course because some people when they are older are absolutely 'compos mentis' and if they have their health they can do all sorts of

things. But what is a bit distressing is when people are not really very well and they really want to do things and perhaps and then can't quite manage what they are supposed to do and that can cause problems. They can get bad-tempered and that is not good for the church or the people themselves (Patricia, aged 63).

A positive listening ear

Several of the participants considered themselves to have become more thoughtful as they got older and had greater understanding of life issues and events that could make them a positive resource for others: "they may not be very physically able they may be very useful to be good ears listening to people with problems – because they may have gone through that themselves at an earlier stage in their life" (Judith, aged 64). Similarly, when talking about being involved in the hospitality team for the mid-week service at All Saints, Jill observed: "it's surprising how many times these young parents like to talk to somebody who's older – perhaps because they are apart from their parents – I don't know" (Jill, aged 76).

The gift of time

There was also recognition that changes in demands of home and work could give them greater availability and time to offer, for example, "older people who don't have their work to worry about may have more time available and therefore spend a little more time at the church and get the habit of going to church" (Robert, aged 80). His wife added: "yes well we do have time. We haven't got the children to bring up, or worry about careers – that's all dealt with" (Freda, aged 79).

Spiritual growth

There was evidence from the Housegroups that older people at St David's valued the opportunities they had for learning together and for spiritual growth, Annette had spoken of the possibility that the Lunch Club might be a "gentle way perhaps for some to come back to a faith as well" and of people in her Housegroup coming "late to faith" (Annette, aged 69). At least one person could identify their own spiritual growth in older age: "I feel that my faith has grown as I have got older. I feel much closer to God now than I did 40 years ago. But that might be because I am now retired I have a bit more time to think about things" (Gordon, aged 85). Similarly, Robert, who at the time of interview had been unable to get to church due to a leg injury said: "it is important to remember the spiritual needs of older people, like being able to receive communion at home. I feel that coming on a Sunday is a refreshment. It's like going to a petrol station and getting a top-up – and you do not stop needing that when you are old" (Robert, aged 80).

2.   Being older in the church

For many of the participants from St David's growing older had been a process that had happened alongside others in the same church. Therefore, while they were certainly aware of their age, it did not seem to make them feel any different to most others around them. This was perhaps particularly so for those in their 70s and 80s.

> "We were all newly married (as one was married in those days) and everyone was the same age at the church. There were a few people who were a little bit older - maybe ten or twelve years older and then over the years it has just got older and older with people coming and going, mostly of the same age group coming in as went out" (Annie, aged 79).

Generally, therefore, people at St David's seemed more confident and comfortable about their experiences of becoming older within a church community than I had expected them to be, given the anecdotal evidence from ministry at All Saints that had led to the formation of the Story-sharing Group. Perhaps this was in part because they had grown older together in the church, but they also had remained in the majority and carried a strong sense of communal history and belonging:

> "Well the thing is that such a large percentage of us are old, really. Ever since we went to the church in 1964 - and everyone has worked so hard – we were such a lively church and I can look back on some wonderful times and I feel richly blessed that I ever went to (St David's)" (Dorothy, aged 80).

The apparent contentment at St David's was less evident in All Saints, where older people were in the minority. There was a mixed response from a very small number of people, but some strong feelings expressed about their inclusion in the church: "I don't know that they use them terribly much – having said that (Henry) is very active of course" (Mollie, aged 87). One noted it was understandable that the older members of the church were not well known by younger people in the church as "occasionally I have gone to the 10.30 and there are so many I don't know – so why should I wonder if they don't know who the older people are – it's just our paths don't cross" (Jill, aged 76). But one who does regularly attend the 10.30 service was especially exercised by the issue:

> "There are a lot of younger people in our church. And that is good – I am really pleased. But there has got to be a point when the younger ones are not looked after to the exclusion of the older ones, which *can* happen. I am not saying that it does, but it can. I suppose it has always been the same. But when you get into the older category, you sometimes feel you are ignored" (Yvonne, aged 83, *original emphasis*).

A little later the same person observed:

> "I do feel excluded sometimes. There is this phrase in our church called the 'church family' and one or two of us have said we don't feel part of the family really – always – sometimes you do. 'Church family' is an expression used quite a lot. And with a family I think – in an ordinary human family it includes everyone from the very young to the much older – and they all get together sometimes – but that doesn't happen" (Yvonne, aged 83).

Changed attitudes and influences

One or two of those who suggested age had made them more aware of what it is like to be an older person in the church wondered if this had been affected by changes in attitudes towards older people over the years.

> "If I think back to when I was in my 40s at church and we had some elderly people there I think that by and large they were all – if not revered, looked up to – and I wonder now if it is the same any more. If people think 'she's getting on a bit – forget about her 'and push them to one side. I think that's a great pity because I think that some of the elderly people in our church have such a lot to offer" (Amy, aged 77).

While another contrasted attitudes among their own generation with those of younger people and clearly felt the older generation had a greater sense of care for others, than younger people:

> "I think that the attitudes of older people to each other is probably better than what currently seems to be the case of younger people to other younger people. It now seems to me that the attitude as a whole seems to be if I'm all right and my family is all right it doesn't really matter about anybody else. And if somebody else goes to the wall – well it's tough on them. Now I don't think you will have that attitude among older people" (Robert, aged 80).

Participates were aware that ageing congregations was a topical concern in some places, and two of the people at St David's made a point of saying that having an ageing congregation was not of itself an issue to be concerned about: "It's not a problem that the church has older people – the church is active – more active in some areas than others" (David, aged 82). The retired priest spoke with some passion of a well-known preacher he once heard, when questioned at a conference: 'it's alright for you – you always address big congregations and large numbers. What if you had a congregation of a few old ladies?' And he said 'I'd start with the old ladies'.

"And that is the view I take. It is no good moaning that we are all getting older – of course we are. But old people have experience – they have things they can do. There is nothing to stop us developing and helping to develop the church, so that it is not merely old people, so that it reflects what the society in this area is - and you can't do any more than that. If you live in a society of old people we are more likely to have an elderly congregation" (Arthur, aged 91).

Another thought more in terms of how the church should respond practically to having older people among them:

"I think as we get older, we are searching for what (we) can do for older people. The government perceives older people as a burden to the state (but we) can embrace the issue and see them as a group of individuals who perhaps may not be here in the next 10 or 20 years and see what exactly we can do for them, and for those in various needs – maybe just small things - but charity begins from home" (Hilary, aged 62).

3. Growing older and ministry

Generally, participants at St David's expressed confidence in what they contributed to the ministry of the church and felt they were appropriately used by the church, even if in their church it was somewhat necessitous: "I think (St David's) does pretty well in using older people in ministry. I have not been in churches where they don't use older people. It has got to use them or it can't survive" (Annie, aged 79). One reflected on the reality that older people are exercising ministries in many churches:

"I think they see it as *the* older people often – but if you look round at most churches the 80 plus are doing an awful lot of the work. And they don't think they are older – and good for them. I don't intend to sit around in a heap if I get to 90 I will still carry on mowing the lawn I hope and doing things. That's what life is. I think (St David's) is an example of that" (Annette, aged 69, *original emphasis*).

But this contrasted with the experience of the few from All Saints who generally felt older people were not well used in the church: "... quite a lot of (older people) sit on the back row and are silent. I don't know if they have ever refused to take part in anything - but there isn't a lot of evidence during the services they are used" (Jill, aged 76). Yvonne expressed it in stronger terms:

"I don't think the church uses older people much at all – I think the older people are regarded by a minority of the remainder of the congregation - and that's quite

a lot of people – as important I think, but not important enough to be involved in a conversation - which is a shame. But then I have had it said of course that if you got up and walked around and spoke to them – but I can do that but some others are not very mobile and they need someone to go and talk to them rather them having to go round and make the initial chat" (Yvonne, aged 83).

Given their observations about experiences of growing older, they were asked to reflect on whether they thought their ministries had changed with age. Diagram 11 shows several ways in which they could see some changes and generally these were positive issues.
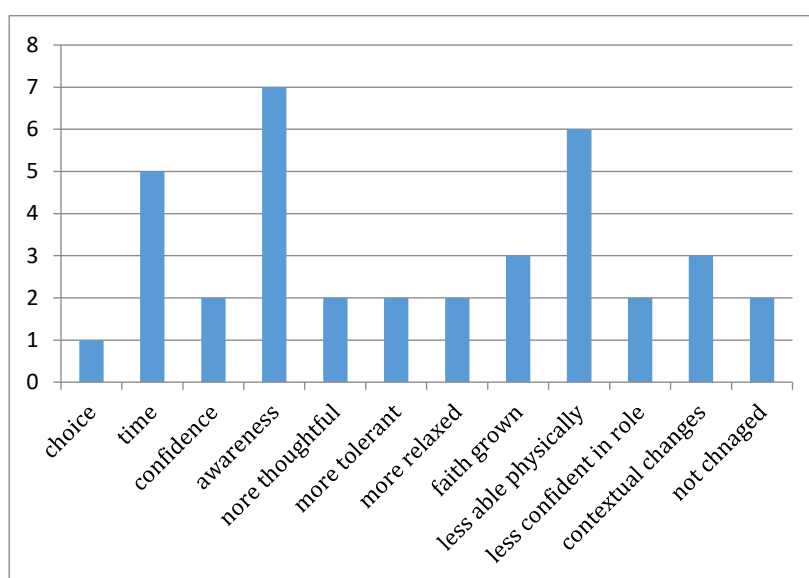
Diagram 11: Perceptions of how ministries had changed with age.

Personal growth and growth in faith

There were several areas in which participants pointed to personal growth and what they had to offer or bring to ministry. These included greater awareness and understanding of life issues and events, experience, awareness of the needs of others, especially older people. They saw themselves as more thoughtful, tolerant and relaxed and had both the time and freedom from other responsibilities to make the choice to be involved. One, who was able to identify a growth or deepening of faith, also saw that as enabling them to grow in ministry:

"The vicars we have had have certainly taken me forward in my faith journey. As I have gone forward, I think perhaps my ministry has gone forward. Perhaps also I have grown in confidence a bit and can talk to people more" (Patricia, aged 63).

Issues of confidence

There was a mixed reflection on issues of confidence. For some the experience was loss of confidence: "I suppose little by little confidence has gone – confidence that I'm the right person to be doing it, whether I am outstaying my welcome" (Amy, aged 77). Another reflected on the specific type of ministry among children she was engaged in and whether age impacted on her confidence in the appropriateness of her undertaking that role:

> "but 63 sounds quite old to be involved in children. I mean maybe you can facilitate – I hope that what I try and do is be very open to ideas of people with young children. But I do think about that every now and again, whether I should still be doing it. I do like doing it; I don't want to do it beyond the time when I am effective" (Janet, aged 63).

Patricia, on the other hand, could see her confidence growing with her faith journey, and also as she moved towards older age "it has certainly given me more confidence in some ways and an awareness of other peoples' experiences" (Patricia, aged 63).

External influences

There were a number who reflected more widely on some of the changes that have taken place in the context of ministry as they have grown older and particularly the role of women. For example, Hilary noted that there are now women Bishops and Sally noted:

> "I'm sure (my ministry) has changed – and of course that is caught up with experience as well. And also the climate of ministry has changed – when I first came in there were deaconesses. And then of course it became possible for women to be ordained. It is only now that I begin to think had I been younger then I might have gone forward – but at the time it did not seem right for me" (Sally, aged 79).

Janet also considered how changes in women's education and employment might have affected them in ministry:

> "I think it is quite difficult for people of a generation ahead of me to realise that there has been an absolute total change of attitude and change of education in recent years. I look at my niece and the difference between me and her is not so big, but between me and my sister-in-law - she is 75 and our generation is huge. Women of my generation have been very fortunate and have had often much better education and think and have got opinions – and they are not daft ones necessarily. I think there are layers of age and there might be a gender thing – because we are the first generation of routinely educated women. Yes and competent and educated women can seem a bit threatening" (Janet, aged 63).

Letting go and moving on

There was some evidence of awareness that the church could not continue without younger people coming into positions of responsibility, but an appreciation that younger people might be less able to commit time. This was especially noted by those in the Lunch Club: "It has got to the stage now where many of the people in the teams are as old as those who come - younger people are working and won't commit to that amount of time" (Phyllis, aged 84). Expectations of a time coming when they would not be able to do some of the things they currently do was mostly linked with practical ministries: "This is what I find getting older is so frustrating – you have to stop doing things that you thought you would always, always be able to do" (Dorothy, aged 80).

Contemplating having to give up what they were doing was clearly painful for some: "I think it is not easy if you have been doing something for a long time – unless you want to – if you are being forced to give up something, I should think it would be painful. It's that business about growing old gracefully" (Gordon, aged 85). Amy, who was involved in all five areas of ministry they had identified was struggling with the idea of giving something up and simply said, "I am probably going to find it harder and harder to admit I can't do things! " (Amy, aged 77).

Prompted by her earlier questioning of whether it was time for her to give up work with children, Janet expressed empathy with those who find they have to let go of ministries as they get older:

> "if you move on as people, give up ministries, how do you continue to value them, but keep them plugged in to other age groups so that their ministries when they have finished them are not devalued or forgotten. I think affirming people's gifts and contributions, is what it is about" (Janet, aged 63).

These observations suggested there were transitions beginning to be negotiated, especially among those who were over 75. It was interesting to note that it was the women who seemed more exercised by the prospect of having to change or let go of some ministries. Even Gordon's "It's that business about growing old gracefully", seemed relatively untroubled. Arthur, the retired priest and the oldest in the group at 91 summed it up for himself:

> "I suppose (your ministry) *must* change because you become more experienced - and you have less dynamic energy than you have when you were younger. But from the beginning I have always, (been) independent or at least to have an independent view of life - not merely swallow everything that people say but to

try to hold that in tension with my views of things. So I sat down and worked out principles of ministry and the essential place of the various parts of ministry – and based my whole ministry on those principles, which lasted through to a more senior age – as I say probably without the same physical energy as you get older" (Arthur, aged 91, *original emphasis*).

Listening to him, and knowing him to be a gracious unassuming presence in the church, it struck me that here might be an example of someone who had successfully negotiated Erikson's task of integration in older age: a man whose ministry had become one of calm wisdom.

Reflection

As I listened to the stories of ministry at St David's it was clear people were dedicated to their ministries but it was the busyness and the hints of weariness that stayed with me. This was linked with the transitions some were contemplating and those for whom the prospect of giving up some of their activities was a genuine struggle. The idea of letting go was uncomfortable, even painful for some. The physicality of their ministries was part of the pressure in those beginning transitions but, for some, it also lay in how much their ministries reflected the caring, feeding, homemaking roles they had been socialised into. Transitions can raise issues of identity and meaning attached to life. Yet some of the changes they identified as coming with age were positive resources, like listening, understanding and awareness which need not be physical in their exercise. Janet's question:" how do you continue to value them, so that their ministries when they have finished them are not devalued or forgotten?" and her answer "I think affirming people's gifts and contributions, is what it is about" (Janet, aged 63), has considerable insight, although she saw it as ending rather than changing.

Perhaps one of the gifts older people can offer to the church and ministry is not in physical activity at all, but in the gift of confident and faithful waiting. Maybe it is in the witness of their own 'waiting for the Lord' in later years, but also maybe a waiting and watching with others in their journeys of faith. Simeon and Anna faithfully waited for the Lord and Simeon expressed his joy in eloquent words when he saw him. Anna, who waited for many years of widowhood until aged 84, saw the infant Jesus brought to the temple, and then talked about the child to everyone (Luke 2:36-39). Theirs was a purposeful waiting and watching for the Lord and God used them both in their waiting and, by their words of response on seeing him, made him known to others. Their lives, as the Psalmist declared,

had been an 'example to many' and a proclamation of God's saving power. But perhaps it does not always need words. Many older people worry about not being good with words. One member of St David's who was not interviewed because of her vulnerability, being housebound, had a profound strength of confidence in her waiting. Two days before she died, she exceptionally made the effort to be brought to church for the service before Lunch Club. It was almost the last thing she did, but her presence communicated a deep sense of peace and serenity to those around her and offered a most powerful ministry that was talked about for some time afterwards.

Jill made a comment about the older people who sit in silence at the back of church and I remembered three elderly sisters who sat at the back of church in my childhood. There was nothing I could say they did, except perhaps smiling and knowing my name. But there must have been something of their faith that was communicated through their presence because ten years later at the funeral of one of them, I experienced an assurance of life as if she had spoken directly to me. The fact that I recall it vividly maybe 50 years later speaks to me of the power of the silent ministry, of being a presence, that I doubt can be learned or manufactured, but must surely be a gift. Arthur at St David's had that gift, although as it happened, he also had a wonderful gift of words. Ministry takes many forms and perhaps for some older people as physicality diminishes it becomes a ministry of being rather than doing. A fear in making such transitions is that older people become invisible. I think I share that fear for myself if I am honest. How we learn to value and recognise these 'being ministries' and to make these transitions, while remaining connected to the whole body, may be key to empowerment for those find it is time to let go of some of what they have done and step into new ways of being ministers.

Chapter 10

Discussion and Conclusions

Trafford and Leshem (2008) suggest conclusions should be drawn on three levels: factual (linking with the research statement), interpretive (linking with the research question) and conceptual (linking with the conceptual framework) (Trafford and Leshem, 2009, pp.170-172). These layers of findings from exploration of the theoretical perspectives and the research, and the conclusions they lead to, are considered in two sections in this chapter: first for what is learned about ministry and collaborative ministry, and secondly, about age, ageing and ministry. In each section, some threads of understanding about the concept of empowerment are identified and the conclusions from these brought together in the final chapter, empowering the ministries of older people.

1.   Ministry and Collaborative Ministry

Ministry and collaborative ministry were explored in Chapter 2, in the case study of Ministry Stories at St David's in Chapter 7 and the testimony from experience of participants from St David's recorded in Chapter 8. There also were some relevant comments about gender and age in Chapter 9.

Defining ministry

I took as a beginning definition for the research, "work done by anyone whether lay or ordained, paid or unpaid, full-time or part-time which they regard as part of God's mission in the world" (Cameron and Duce, 2013, p.xvii). But since the context of research was the Church of England, I took as implicit the Church of England's assertion that "all who are baptised are called to ministry, whether that is lay or ordained" (Church of England 2015a). This implies ministry may take many forms, but with some differentiation between activity and agent. It does not imply any boundaries of gender, age, class or any other characteristic nor place(s) of ministry. It leaves open the possibility of change over time, influence of life stages or circumstances and of transition between different ministries.

I had a rich and varied experience of ministry in different ecclesial traditions, from Baptist upbringing, as a member of the Church of England and later in both lay and ordained ministry. I also had learned, from experience, ministry could be in the home, in care of family and in secular employment. Therefore, I could understand and defend an argument that ministry is what is done by those who have an accredited or authorised role in the

church, but gained an almost evangelical view that it is as broad as anything any Christian does in any part of their life, including in the church.

Summary of findings from the research:

1. Ministry was defined in terms of relationship and function, with stronger emphasis on relational (inter-personal) activities.

2. A diverse range of activities further defined ministry across five broad areas:
   a. Worship: leading services, preaching, reading, assisting in communion, altar preparation, intercession and Sunday School teaching.

   b. Pastoral care: some visiting, prayer ministry and the pastoral function of the identified cases.

   c. Group activities: primarily the three identified cases of Lunch Club, Coffee Shop and Housegroups.

   d. Practical help and care of buildings: cleaning, flower arranging and seasonal activities such as the annual Christmas Fair.

   e. Management and administration: serving on committees, maintaining external and ecumenical links.

3. Only two participants mentioned God when defining ministry.

Although the open question, 'what does the word ministry mean to you?' caused some participants to hesitate, most found it easier to define a wide range of activities as ministry. It was not the intention to limit ministry to a list of activities, but these people were clearly more comfortable with a task-focused approach and there was little reference to ministry that might be accomplished through presence or being. Only one, Amy, mentioned the idea of presence when speaking of the ministry of the Lunch Club. The retired priest's definition put relationship with God first and a concern for the health and wealth of all with whom he came into contact, which left open the possibility of both doing and being.

These definitions and lists of activity were consistent with understanding ministry as anything a person does as part of God's mission in the world (Cameron and Duce, 2013), even though there was so little direct reference to God. The shared parameters of church and age meant there was little talk of what people do in the community or in daily living, but it was implicit in some words and phrases used that they would not otherwise have imposed that boundary. Similarly, there was little reference to the relevance of either gender or age, although some did note external changes affecting the roles open to women

and one questioned whether age might affect eligibility for ministry with children (see page 115, Janet).

However, the issue of agency through baptism posed an unexpected question when one participant, a Lunch Club team member, contributing fully to its ministry, made it clear she was neither a baptised member of the church nor claimed any religious belief. It was not possible to infer she considered what she was doing was part of God's mission in the world and therefore, although there was nothing to distinguish what she did and the work of other members of the team, the definition of ministry adopted for this research meant theirs was ministry but hers was not. The exclusion may have been correct but felt uncomfortable.

Collaborative Ministry

There are continuing debates about the concept of collaborative ministry as a pattern of ministry and it is open to interpretation in different contexts. However, if ministry is the calling and the commission of all who are baptised, it follows that the exercise of ministry in the church will be carried out alongside and in some form of relationship with others. Therefore, collaborative ministry could be described simply as people working together in ministry. But there are many ways of working together in ministry in the church, and various terms to describe them, including shared ministry, enabled ministry, every-member ministry and priesthood of all believers. Latterly, there has been the emergence of ministry teams, in which lay and ordained are formally commissioned to work together. Those who argue collaborative ministry is a new and distinct pattern of ministry say it requires a radical revisioning of its organisation, characterised by equality in relationships between ministers. This raises issues of power and questions about whether it can operate fully in the Church of England while traditional patterns of organisational hierarchy, or 'inherited patterns' of leadership persist.

In a lay ministry role in the Church of England, I was part of a collaborative ministry initiative, with responsibility to empower others in their ministries. I witnessed many forms of ministry at first hand and came to a view that it was indeed to be found in the kitchen or office as much as in the sanctuary and pastoral care. There were many examples of people working together, yet I could see subtle barriers, real and presumed, at work in how these ministries were perceived. We might have spoken of valuing all the many and varied ministries, but the language used was often of 'from greatest and least', leaving some feeling that what they did was somehow inferior, and others unsure of their capacity or eligibility to exercise the gifts they undoubtedly had been given for ministry.

Summary of findings from the research:

1. The Ministry Stories of Lunch Club and Coffee Shop were examples of people brought together for ministry and of some continuing over significant periods of time.

2. The Lunch Club was a clergy initiative in which clergy and laity worked together. It continued after that vicar left but as an entirely a lay-led ministry.

3. Housegroups had a history of laity and clergy working together, but were affected by clergy moves. A remnant of two groups remained, independently lay-led, with no evidence of structural connection between them or the wider church.

4. Two-thirds of the participants were exercising a range of roles assisting clergy in the worship life of the church.

5. Two people had been given responsibility for leading different forms of services by former clergy. One survived changes in clergy, but the other lost responsibility when a new vicar discontinued those services.

6. Most considered themselves to be agents of ministry but one regarded it as the preserve of clergy ("Minister, ministering to their congregations") and one person identified changes in patterns of ministry in recent years that had brought laity and clergy into a "ministry complex" relationship.

As I looked at the evidence from the research it was clear people were working together in ministry at St David's. The Lunch Club, initiated by a former vicar and his wife had brought others into ministry in a way that could be described as shared or enabled ministry. But as this and the other two cases of ministry at St David's had continued, they became entirely lay-led and operated independently of any structural relationship with either the clergy or the body of the church. Arguably there was some link between the Lunch Club and the church through the communion service that preceded it and the brief reports in the church APCMs but these were tenuous and did little to anchor the ministries as part of the organic whole. The Housegroups had a strong historical profile but had become almost invisible in the life of the church, although providing a welcome and nurturing ministry to those who attended them. Even so, these were examples of people working together in ministry and contributing to the life and ministry of the church.

It took time for me to name these ministries at St David's as collaborative ministry because I had assumed there should be lay and ordained working together or at least some direct connecting relationship between those who are ministering and those in church leadership. Similarly, I initially denied the Story-sharing Group at All Saints was collaborative ministry. As a member of the Ministry and Mission Team there, I could be

said to have exercised a pseudo-clerical role, but the fact remained we were all lay people. Looking again at these ministry stories, it is hard not to call them examples of collaborative ministry, irrespective of the status of those who were partners in ministry. At St David's this was clearest perhaps with the Lunch Club where there was a strong sense of working as a team for a common purpose with qualities of pastoral ministry through the gift of hospitality. The fact that none of the teams included an ordained member did not mean they had ceased to be collaborative ministry.

Individual stories also provided some examples of people being brought into ministry alongside clergy, and some awareness that this was a pattern of relationships that had changed over the years. The notion of a 'ministry complex' was engaging, but apart from the one person who continued to lead Taize services, none had been given, and then retained, responsibility in ministry beyond doing what was required to assist the clergy, who remained in control. They may have been offering ministries, but it was not clear that this could be called collaborative ministry. The issue of power, role and relationships between ministers, including those in leadership, is an issue for ministry in whatever form, pattern or structure it is exercised. Ministries will be many and varied but an implied hierarchy continues to echo through our understanding of what ministry is and that has implications for empowerment into and in ministry.

Nevertheless, issues concerning power and relationships with church leaders did not seem to exercise people at St David's. Generally, they were content to continue in their ministries, subject to concerns associated with physical ageing, without reference to anyone in authority or church leadership. Arguably this was an example of people empowered in ministries, but they lacked connection to the wider body of the church. In addition, while there was some evidence of people being encouraged and welcomed by clergy into contributing to ministry, there were examples of ministries being adversely affected and even stopped because of changes in clergy leadership. Power is inherent in organisational structures and human relationships. How it is exercised can affect both who gets involved, or excluded, and how they are empowered to identify and exercise their gifts for ministry. Further, the fact that all those involved in some ministries were lay volunteers did not necessarily mean issues of power did not affect team relationships or operate to exclude others.

The overall impression at St David's was that even though many of the participants were involved in several areas and forms of ministry, this did not stem from any sense of being part of an overall pattern of ministry or of connectedness between ministries. It left them

vulnerable to executive decision and absence of mutual support and encouragement. Irrespective of debates about whether it was collaborative ministry, it raised a question whether this general lack of connection with the whole body of the church could be linked to issues of empowerment and disempowerment.

Engagement with and being sustained in ministry

If ministry is understood to be the calling of the baptised, the point at which ministry begins is not determined by entry into any particular form of ministry. However, what motivates people to take up specific forms of ministry may give some clues as to what empowers them in ministry. Similarly, what keeps them involved in those ministries may help understand something of empowerment, but it may also help understand how and why transitions are made between ministries.

Summary of findings from the research:

1. Participants from St David's identified four main influences on them becoming involved in ministry in the church.

    a) Direct approaches from clergy or others in ministry was the most identified influence.

    b) Perceived and advertised need was similarly strong.

    c) Influence of early family and church experience and example was highlighted by two-thirds of the group and had led to some assuming they would and could take on responsibilities in time.

    d) Only two spoke of a sense of calling to ministry, one of whom was the retired priest.

2. Other factors, which combined with either being directly approached or an advertised need, concerned a desire to use their skills within the church, to have a purpose or greater sense of belonging.

3. The strongest sustaining influence lay in relationships that were formed either with those to whom they were ministering or with those with whom they shared ministry.

4. There was some reference to spiritual experience, prayer and scripture as factors that encouraged and sustained them, although with one exception in each church there was no mention of God, nor of the Holy Spirit.

All tparticipants had stories to tell about how they became involved in different ministries in the church. Most had been involved in more than one area of ministry at the same time. Several participants at St David's had continued in some of these ministries for long periods of time, as well as some who made transitions into new ministries as personal

circumstances and home or work responsibilities changed. It was not clear if this was also true of those at All Saints, but the impression there was of more transient ministries.

There was little reference to the idea of God being involved in their decisions to step into ministries, but a little more recognition of being sustained by God or by spiritual experience once they were exercising them. It was noticeable that only two people spoke of calling in ministry. One, the retired priest, was prompted by another priest, followed by a period of personal prayer and exploration. The other, a woman who remained part of the laity, appeared reticent to claim a sense of being called by God. She found her ministries in employment as a physiotherapist and at different times at St David's as part of church management and in her gift for arranging flowers to decorate the church. Then in retirement her primary ministry was to be part of the Lunch Club team and in the church's ministry of hospitality. Hers was an example of how ministries may change because of life circumstances or stages.

Several identified the role of clergy in inspiring, encouraging or persuading them into ministry. For some, this was both in opening eyes to opportunities and in building confidence to take the step into something new, as for example in Nancy's story of how she became involved in Lunch Club (page 78), and Amy's being encouraged to take up the role of deacon . These examples highlight the importance of relationships in empowerment, in this case with clergy, who it seemed were keen to involve laity in the worship and pastoral life of the church. Others, had been brought into ministry through personal invitation and encouragement from people already in the teams, as for example in Lunch Club or Coffee Shop. They then found they were sustained by gaining a sense of being valued by those with whom and to whom they were ministering. Such peer affirmation was a strength in their collaboration, although there were hints of it leading to some insularity and exclusiveness in these activities. They had a strong sense of belonging together in these groups which might have been empowering, but their exclusivity might also have contributed to their anxiety about the future.

A common thread in most of these stories was the influence of relationships with others who were already in some form of ministry. For a few the influence was rooted in early family life experiences and examples of ministry of parents or even grandparents, which had instilled in them an expectation that they would grow into making their own contributions to church life and ministry. It was the experience of relationships built with the Story-sharing Group at All Saints that had I had found personally empowering and had helped each of them to grow in confidence to minister to each other and through the

project. That ministry began with a purpose to increase the visibility and sense of belonging of older people who appeared to be marginalised and undervalued and succeeded in raising their profile and providing evidence of their capacity to contribute to the ministry and mission of the church. It was not ministry in a conventional sense perhaps, but it made connections within the church and in the community which seemed to have empowered them. But the research participants from All Saints, who had been part of that project, had lost some of that connection and were again expressing feelings of being marginalised or excluded in the church. There was even some physical manifestation of that when it was revealed they now meet in a separate annexe building behind the church. A little like the Housegroups at St David's, they had become isolated and invisible. The lack of connection seems to have been a factor that diminished their empowerment.

2.   Age, ageing and Ministry

Issues of age, ageing and ministries of older people were explored from a theoretical perspective in Chapter 3 and from experience of research participants in Chapter 8. They were also the subject of Appendix 2, which focused particularly on the theory and impact of discrimination on the grounds of age.

Age was an issue that directly affected the forms and types of ministry open to me, while I discovered the potential of older people in ministry that I found enriching. These among other experiences influenced the objective motivation for research. However, as I listened to the stories of the research participants I became much more aware of the personal impact of what becoming older means, as well as a deeper understanding of the relationship between age and ministry.

Experiences of age and ageing

Issues associated with age and ageing are multi-layered and may impact on what people offer or are able, or enabled, to contribute in ministry. They can be affected by personal experience of body or mind, cultural assumptions and structural processes. Therefore, participants were invited to reflect first on their experience of growing older and then of being an older person in the church.

> **Summary of findings from research:**
>
> 1. Half of the participants at St David's identified issues of loneliness and isolation in old age and some linked this with bereavement and loss of mobility.
>
> 2. Changes and deterioration in physical and mental health were recognised as common experiences that brought with them the prospect of having to stop some activities.
>
> 3. There were positive resources that come with age, notably a listening understanding ear and the gift of time.
>
> 4. There was some recognition that older age can be a time for spiritual growth and some personal testimony of faith development.

There was nothing extraordinary or exceptional in what the older people at St David's and All Saints said about their experiences of age and ageing. Many of the commonly understood issues that were discussed in Chapter 3 and in Appendix 2 were reflected in what they shared about their own experiences and in some of their observations of others. They highlighted how age may have physical and social consequences that can affect personal relationships as well as relationships in community groups and our churches. These may be of a physical or practical nature, due to the reality of physical changes, loss of mobility or sensory loss and can make participation difficult. They may lie more in changes in mental health, or emotional challenges due to loss of relationships. They can affect sense of general well-being, confidence and belonging, or contribute to feeling isolated or excluded. All these are factors that can lead to disempowerment.

Some of these experiences may mean there are new or increased pastoral needs for the church to consider and respond to. Again, these may be of a practical nature, but older people also have spiritual needs and may be looking for spiritual nurture and opportunities for growth in faith learning and development. However, the research also found evidence of positive qualities that can come with age and these should not be overlooked. Most older people will have lived through a range of life events and experiences that can give them sensitivity to the challenges faced by others negotiating different stages in life. They have direct experience of some of the consequences of ageing that may equip them with understanding of their peers. They may have more time and the ability to make choices in how to use their time. This opens the possibility of older people as a resource for ministry. But given that they may themselves be experiencing some of the disempowering effects and consequences of ageing, such as issues of confidence and well-being, it may be necessary to consider proactive strategies if they are to be empowered to exercise these gifts in ministry.

Being an older person in the church

The realty of an ageing population and ageing church congregations is a contemporary issue that can be regarded as a challenge or even a threat. Ageism, has been well researched as a social issue, but how it operates in the church is less well understood. It can lead to experiences of being or feeling marginalised, silenced, invisible, feeling a burden. It can affect self-confidence and spiritual as well as physical well-being. Even though there are some encouraging studies that recognise older people are a resource to the church, ageism is one factor that may reinforce an assumption that an older person receiving pastoral care cannot also be exercising some other form of ministry, or a failing to recognise when they are.

Summary of findings from the research:

1. Participants at St David's expressed general contentment with how they were perceived and used in church

2. Most of the older people at St David's had been at the church for many years and had grown older together. They also formed most of the church membership and congregations.

3. The small number of participants from All Saints were less content and expressed some strong individual feelings of being ignored or excluded. They were in a minority in the church.

4. Being older had made some feel more aware of the challenges faced by other older people in the church and some apprehension about how they in turn might be treated.

5. There were two comments specifically countering assumptions that ageing congregations are a problem for churches and affirming the potential of older congregations.

The responses of participants at St David's and All Saints were more divergent than expected. Those at St David's seemed generally content and comfortable while the few participants at All Saints expressed more negative views, including some expressions of marginalisation and even exclusion. Women were in the majority in both groups and it was the women who expressed the strongest feelings of marginalisation. The fact that older people were in the majority at St David's and had grown older together, in contrast to the profile at All Saints, raised the possibility of numerical presence and shared sense of belonging as an empowering factor. In addition, however, none of the older people at All Saints were in positons or roles that might be perceived to have influence or power. This also was in direct contrast to St David's where older people occupied many of the key

roles and responsibilities and therefore seemed to have a stronger sense of connection to the whole body of the church.

There was a glimpse of some of the ageist attitudes explored in Appendix 2 which affect ministry and older people in church in what was said by participants from both All Saints, and St David's. For example, Amy's confessed anxiety that older people might be forgotten or pushed to one side, or Hilary, who spoke of 'doing for them'. She was making a point of positive affirmation in the face of what she saw as attitudes that regard old people as a burden, but it also labelled older people as a group in need. Looking back at research in chapter 8, while those ministering through the Lunch Club were themselves older people, their motivation was often expressed in terms of the perceived neediness of others in that category. However, in general, at least at St David's, the reality of having older people in the church was regarded as a positive strength.

Older people in ministry

The research focused on ministries exercised by older people because a concern for age and ageing has found expression mostly in the church's search for ways of ministering *to* the needs of older people. This is an important development, but can neglect the fact that older people are themselves a resource *for* ministry. and are exercising a wide range of ministries in the church.

Summary of findings from research:

1. People aged 62-91 were exercising a range of ministries at St David's.

2. Most were involved in more than one area of ministry and, within these areas, in several contributory forms of ministry.

3. The greatest commitment was to the running of group activities, but they were also heavily involved in the worship life of the church.

4. Pastoral care was the smallest identified area of ministry, but there were elements of pastoral care in each of the ministry cases.

5. There was some evidence that 'older-old' were proportionately more involved in worship and 'younger-old' in church management.

6. The small number of people at All Saints, aged 76-87, were not involved in such a breadth of church life. They were not involved in church management or practical help and care of the buildings and only one had a peripheral role in worship.

The evidence to support the thesis that older people do exercise ministries in the church and play a vital part in its ministry and mission was inescapable and strong. However, given that St David's was chosen for case study because it was a parish where the profile of older people in the church was high and many were contributing to distinct ministries, this was not a surprising finding. The extent to which individuals were involved across a range of areas and forms of ministry was less apparent on the surface, but clearly emerged as the research dug a little deeper. Older people were the main agents in the group ministries, but many were also involved as individuals in the worship life of the church and were heavily committed in all the main administrative and management roles. They also contributed practical ministry in the care of the church. This gave them a functional connection across all areas of church life and perhaps an enhanced sense of belonging together as part of the whole body of the church. However, there was some evidence of differences within the broad age-range of older people, in that it was the 'younger-old' who were involved more in management and 'older-old' who invested heavily in the worship life of the church.

The much smaller group of participants at All Saints were not engaged in such breadth of ministries and one was not sure she had been involved in ministry at all, despite being a founding member of the Story-sharing Group. They were not represented in church management or administration and only one identified a peripheral role in the ministry area of worship. While older people at St David's expressed contentment about the extent to which they were used in the church, even though some acknowledged it was necessitous, those at All Saints suggested older people were not well used at all, were less visible and even silent in the life of the church. They were all exercising ministries but were not expressing the same sense of belonging as people at St David's and did not have the same relational and functional connections to support and encourage them.

Growing older in ministry
Most of the participants at St David's could look back over many years in the church and could identify ministries they had been involved in over long periods of time while they had been negotiating different life stages. They were invited to reflect on whether and how their ministries might have changed as they had grown older.

> **Summary of findings from research:**
>
> 1. Several personal qualities for ministry were identified, including: increased availability, being more thoughtful, aware of needs, and being more relaxed and tolerant.
>
> 2. There was mixed assessment of confidence to continue in ministries or to take up new roles.
>
> 3. Some external factors were noted, including those affecting roles of women in church and changes in social life and education, that also affected women's availability and expectations.
>
> 4. Anticipating having to give up ministries weighed heavily for some.

Most participants approached this question from the perspective of what they had to offer to ministry. They re-iterated some of the positive qualities of greater awareness and understanding of life events, increased availability and freedom to offer time and be a listening ear. Some saw themselves as more relaxed, without the pressures they saw affecting younger generations, and thought they were more tolerant. However, it was not clear to what extent they could see how these qualities were being applied in ministries, except perhaps in Jill's involvement in the midweek WoW service at All Saints, where she could identify the value of being a listening ear for young parents.

There was a small but mixed focus on issues of confidence associated with age and the exercise of ministry. For two it was about decreasing confidence or questioning whether age made it inappropriate to continue in that area of ministry. But for one (Patricia, aged 63), age had brought an increasing confidence that gave her greater understanding, which she also linked with her growth in faith and being able to talk with people. Perhaps it was significant that she associated this increase in confidence with the support and encouragement of her vicar and her own faith journey. Issues of confidence are directly relevant to both empowerment and disempowerment.

As well as the effects of internal changes through ageing, there was some recognition of external changes, particularly in the social and economic context and especially how that may have affected the ministries of women. This was not only in the roles women can undertake in the church, such as through ordination, but in the expectations of women who have had access to greater education opportunities, not as widely open to those in the 'older-old' generation. Janet, aged 63, at St David's, had offered thoughtful insight into this and wondered not only if the changes were not well understood by the generation before her, but whether competent and educated women might be perceived as threatening to

church leaders. This raised a different issue for empowerment that touches on the ability of leaders to embrace what people bring to ministry without feeling personally intimidated and whether there is a gender dimension to this.

There was evidence that the effects of ageing were beginning to impact on the capacity of some older people to continue in ministries and some uncertainty about how their ministries might have to change. At the same time, there was a determination to keep going either because they did not want to lose the pleasure they derived from them or because they were convinced there was no-one to take their place. The physicality of their ministries, especially at St David's, may have contributed to some of the emphasis on the inevitability of change in their ministry. For some of them the anticipation of change and transition was uncomfortable, even painful, to contemplate. This was not exclusively those who were entering, or negotiating. 'older-old' age, but it was people in this age-group who raised the issues most clearly and associated them with an anticipated loss. It left a sense of vulnerability associated with transitions which may need to be considered when looking at empowerment. Work may need to be done to understand the experience of transitions and the ministries that remain or are open to people in this stage of life.

Chapter 11

Empowering Ministries of Older People in the Church

In this final chapter, I draw together the learning from this research to conclude what it might be that empowers older people in their ministries and what lessons can be drawn for their empowerment in the future.

First, I turn briefly to reconnect with why the research was undertaken and the experience of carrying it out. As in any practical theology, the research enquiry began in practice experience. During five years of lay ministry in All Saints, questions emerged about what good practice in collaborative ministry might look like. But there was also a discovered joy in sharing ministry with a group of older people, who had otherwise felt marginalised and even invisible in the church. It was the dissonance between my experience of disempowerment as a (not quite) older person going into church ministry and the experiences of working collaboratively with these older people that sparked the interest in what it is that empowers older people in ministry.

It became possible to implement the intention to research after moving to minister in a church, which I have called St David's, where older people were apparently confidently and visibly exercising ministry. This contrasted with some previous experiences and I named the difference a factor of empowerment. The dual focus of enquiry was collaborative ministry and issues of age and ageing, with empowerment as a connecting concept. When I set out, I expected to find a complex picture because both strands of enquiry are multifaceted and although both have an existing research base, there is little that has considered them in combination. The concept of empowerment added another dimension to that. I also expected the research journey to be complex, but did not expect it to be quite as challenging as it became, when both the context of my ministry and personal circumstances changed during its completion.

Although the research could only be a snapshot in time, it took place over a period when St David's was negotiating the uncertainty of transition following the departure of its incumbent. Among the older people who were research participants there were some negotiating their own personal transitions from 'young' to 'old' older age and I too was in a time of transition of both engaging with 'young-older' age and anticipating the uncertainty of a further move on in ministry from St David's. It was inevitable that the research would touch some sensitive areas and it was essential to cultivate a reflexive approach in its implementation.

The image of ministry re-visited

This image was introduced as a "visual metaphor for both ministry and the experience of the research journey" (page 2). It has an apparently calm quality, but beneath the surface there are steep and rocky pathways, places of isolated, painful struggle as well as places of joyful encounter. Some of it is clearly visible and some, like the river valley beneath the cloud, is hidden.

The metaphor has proved an accurate reflection in both respects. The research uncovered many threads of influence that severally and collectively affect both how we understand ministry and age and make for a level of complexity beneath the surface. These include; organisational structures, cultures and leadership, issues of identity, personal life transitions, relationships and faith. There are also multi-dimensional factors, including issues of power, inequality and discrimination, that pose a challenge to existing patterns of ministry, and have implications for inter-personal relationships and culture of the church. In completing the research, I have discovered both ministry and research may be experienced in moments of joy but also times of deep challenge and even pain. Both may be accomplished in action, but it is also in quiet, sometimes hidden, presence and reflection. Both have story and history, each in their own way seeking for truth and reconciliation, belonging and healing. Both seek capacity for change, even transformation. It was indeed a complex enquiry, but with all the complexity, of seeking and working, it, like the place in the metaphor image, has also been a place of meeting with God.

In the beginning, God.

The rock, central in the image, represented the centrality of God in my calling to ministry and in the ministry which I have sought to fulfil. Defining ministry as "doing something for God" encapsulated that. These were words of Amy, one of only two of the research participants who mentioned God when asked what ministry meant to them. The absence of talk of God among people who appeared to be confidently exercising various forms of ministry was surprising, and Amy's statement stood out both for its reference to God and its simplicity. Perhaps, in deciding to use the phrase as the title of the research, I should have posed it as a question, but it is not my question. Maybe I would have preferred her to say 'with God' rather than 'for God', because my theology of ministry is that, however it is defined, it is a channel for God's mission that cannot be accomplished except through an encounter and journey with God. But whether it is with or for, I continue to believe, God is in the beginning and at the centre.

The question of empowerment

The aim of the research was to explore what it is that empowers older people in ministry. The research undertaken found evidence that in St David's, and to a lesser extent in All Saints, older people were exercising a wide range of ministries in the church. They were doing so with faithfulness, determination and tenacity. They were showing themselves to be a resource of people in the church, equipped with knowledge, understanding and skills for its work of ministry. However, there was also some evidence that the added dimension of the impact age and ageing can cause older people to feel marginalised or even excluded and this can militate against their empowerment to minister. These findings, together with what has been discovered through examining the theoretical perspectives, provide some clues to what has empowered these older people in this research context. It leaves open for consideration whether this learning and these clues might also apply to other churches and situations.

Learning about empowerment has been threaded through the research and in the reflections at the end of each chapter. As I sat with each of the reflections some key points and themes emerged, which are summarised in Diagram 12 on page 136. The diagram is intended to show that there are both discrete and interrelated issues of ministry and age that contribute to understanding empowerment of older people in ministry. For example,

Ministry -	Age -
• is the work of all who are baptised and age is no barrier to that.	• does not end ministry, but it may mean ministries change. • brings diverse experiences, physical, emotional, gains, losses. • is subject to multi-layered experiences of discrimination.

Empowerment requires listening to the voices of older people with sensitivity to issues of discrimination, self-awareness and commitment to change.

Ministry -	Age -
• is relational • requires openness to embrace others	• brings experiences of discrimination that affect how we relate to others.

Empowerment requires understanding about how we build relationships with people who may feel powerless or marginalised.

Ministry -	Age -
• requires working together • can be challenged by issues of personal, cultural and structural power	• also is affected by issues of power in interpersonal relationships, cultural assumptions and structural processes.

Empowerment of older people requires attention to issues of power at all these levels.
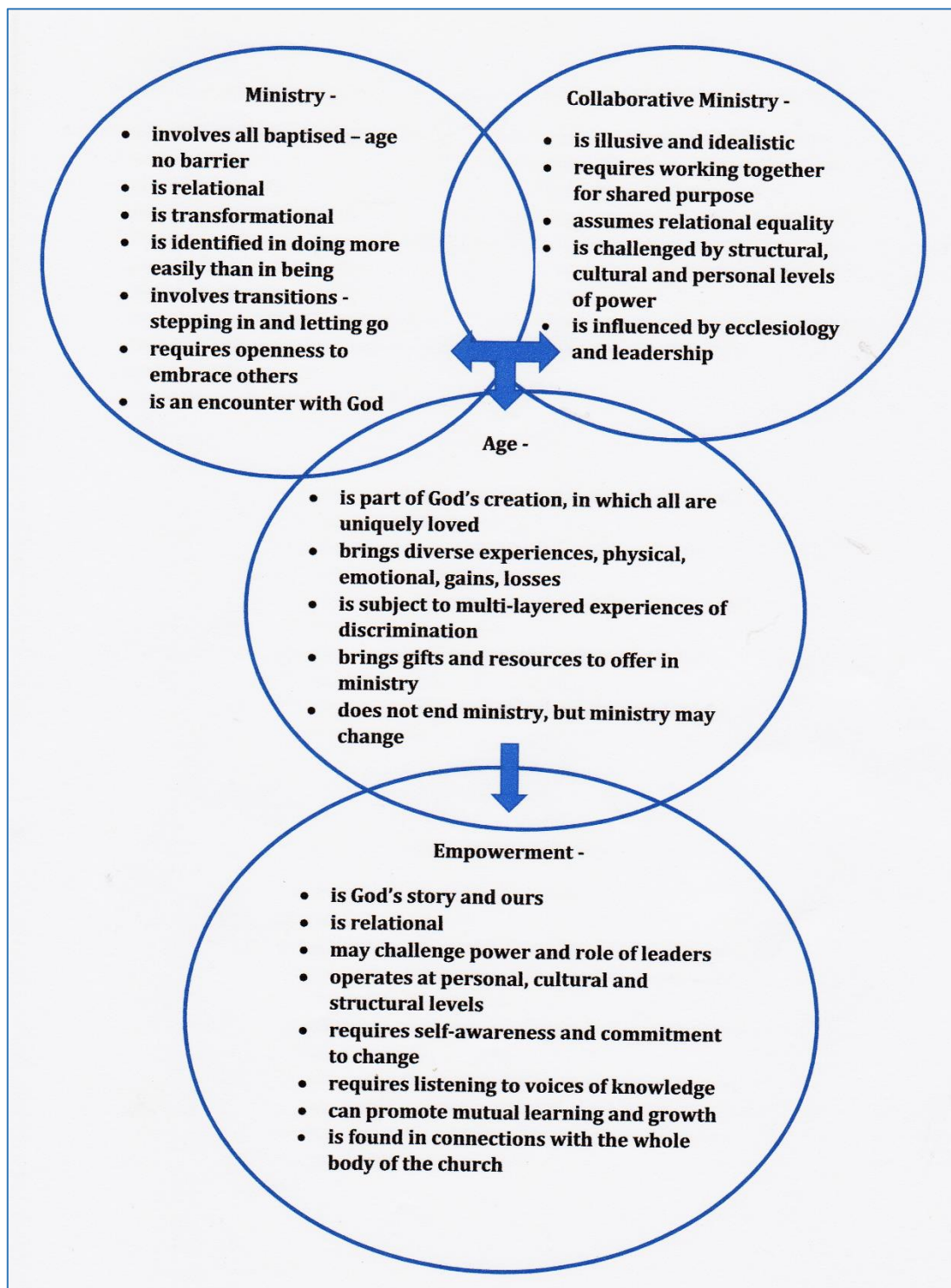
Diagram 12. Building Blocks of Learning from the research and reflections

Some steps towards empowerment of older people in ministry

Using this approach to reflection on learning, I have drawn the following conclusions

about empowerment and what it is that can empower older people in their ministries.

1. **Empowerment is God's story and ours**

   The concept of empowerment is multifaceted, but, as the examination of its theoretical perspectives found, its essence is in helping people to bring about change or transformation in their lives and circumstances. It is about releasing their potential and building on strengths. One definition (page 48) also spoke of helping people to influence others and bring about change. All this could be said to lie in the purpose of God's story and relationship with humanity, and the call to tell that story in ministry. Age should be no barrier to that. Neither the theoretical perspectives on ministry, nor on empowerment, drew any boundaries of age. Further, the exploration of age (chapter 3) and its reflection supported the concept of growth through life, capacity for life-long relationship with God, who creates, calls and equips all for ministry. The exploration of ministry (chapter 2) and empowerment (chapter 4) affirmed the notion that all in the church are empowered to use gifts given by the Holy Spirit in ministry. Age was not mentioned there either. However, this fails to consider how human interaction and organisational structures can empower or disempower both the discernment and practice of gifts in ministry. Such human intervention can affect whether older people are recognised and used as God's ministers. Although the research in St David's and All Saints found little refence made to God, it did find almost all participants considered themselves agents of ministry in various forms. They did not use the language of empowerment, nor of gifts of the Spirit, but it was implicit in that context they were participants in God's ministry story and were exercising gifts, including those of hospitality, faith, teaching and administration.

   Empowerment of older people begins when we recognise they are part of God's story, have a part to play in God's story of ministry and mission to the world, and are equipped with gifts for this ministry.

2. **Empowerment is relational**

   The examination of theoretical perspectives of ministry (chapter 2) and empowerment (chapter 4) established both are about working in relationship with others. This was endorsed by findings from research (chapter 8) in which most participants defined ministry in relational terms and evidence from the research (chapters 7, 8 and 9) that they were in fact ministering both with clergy and in groups of laity. The emphasis in theoretical perspectives was on partnership, characterised by respect, building trust and being open to what the other brings. Additionally, in collaborative ministry it was on equality in relationships. However, issues of power in organisational structures and in inter-personal relationships, can affect these

relational qualities. Further, the examination of theoretical perspectives on age and ageing (chapter 3 and Appendix 2) showed how relationships with older people can be affected by discrimination which may serve to exclude them from working with others, something that was hinted at among participants at All Saints. There was some recognition of this as a concern of growing older at St David's, but otherwise they seemed secure in their relationships with each other, and these appeared to be an empowering factor for them.

Older people can be partners in ministry if their presence and gifts are recognised and there is a commitment on both sides to build working relationships to use them.

3. **Empowerment requires attention to the role leaders**

   Examination of the theoretical perspectives of collaborative ministry (chapter 2) emphasised the pivotal role of leaders. However, they work within organisational cultures and structures which will either facilitate, or militate against, collaborative working. They also have personal power through their role and how they exercise that power will affect inclusion and patterns of working. It was also shown in examining both ministry (chapter 2) and empowerment (chapter 4) that sharing power can be challenging if it is perceived to affect status or authority and leaders need self-confidence as well as skills in facilitation, teamwork and good communication to overcome this. Theoretical perspectives on age (chapter 3 and Appendix 2) also found those in positions of power can act on discriminatory attitudes and therefore developing self-awareness and insight into the issue and impact of discrimination is important as well as commitment to work in an anti-discriminatory way. The research (chapters 7 and 8), found no direct evidence of discrimination by leaders on the grounds of age. Rather, there were some positive examples of older people leading ministries and some of people who had been positively encouraged by leaders to take up ministries. However, there was some evidence of ministries being vulnerable to changes in leadership, and although there was nothing to indicate this was on the grounds of age, it underlines the power in the role of leaders to empower or disempower others in ministry.

To empower older people into ministry, leaders must be aware of their own attitudes to older people and be willing to build positive, respectful and trusting relationships with them. Older people can also be leaders of ministry.

4. **Empowerment requires a multi-layered response to discrimination**

    The examination of theoretical perspectives on age (chapter 3 and Appendix 2) explained some of the physical, emotional and spiritual impact of ageing, which was also found in the experiences of research participants. The discussion also highlighted personal, cultural and structural levels of discrimination which can lead to loss of confidence, exclusion or self-exclusion. Theoretical perspectives on empowerment (chapter 4) showed different layers of action are needed to overcome these disempowering effects, but it must begin with acceptance that discrimination exists and an understanding of the impact it has. It also emphasised the importance of focusing on strengths, not deficiencies. It may be easier to empower at the personal level, as shown in some examples in the research of confidence-building in individuals to enable them to step into ministries and in the history of the Story-sharing Group. However, even at this level empowerment may take time and persistence and remains vulnerable to the actions and commitment of those in power.

Older people may need help to overcome some of the negative effects of discrimination and the changes that come with age, to be confident in continuing or taking up ministries. Looking at strengths is a good place to start.

5. **Empowerment requires listening**

    Listening to each other and to God is at the heart of ministry. As theoretical perspectives on empowerment found being listened to is empowering and being able to hear what people have to say as experts in their own story is vital. This was part of the experience of working with the Story-sharing Group at All Saints. However, as an examination of theoretical perspectives on age showed, voices of older people can be silenced because of experiences of discrimination or marginalisation or weakened in times of transition. Although this is not exclusively an issue for older people, times of transition may be times of particular vulnerability, when extra care in listening is needed if they are not to feel marginalised or neglected. This was supported by some evidence from research, notably among those at All Saints, but in the anxieties about growing older of some at St David's.

Older people may need space to voice their stories and experiences to claim their strengths, especially in times of transition. There are several ways this can be done, but finding ways to listen to them is the first step.

6. **Empowerment can bring mutual learning and growth**

   Theoretical perspectives on empowerment suggested that, practised well, empowerment can bring mutual benefit, learning and growth. It can be transformative for both the worker (minister) and those with whom they work. Theoretical perspectives on age indicated older people can have gifts of knowledge and understanding but also need for spiritual nurture and growth. There was some endorsement of life-long learning and learning through intergenerational encounter. There was evidence to support this in the research, in what participants said about experiences of growing older and among those who ministered in St David's Lunch Club and Housegroups, and Janet's observation about working with children (page 100). It also had been the experience of the Story-sharing Group at All Saints.

Older people have a life-time of learning to offer and contribute to the learning of others. Some are learning the Christian story for the first time. There is much to be gained from finding creative ways of continuing to learn together.

7. **Empowerment is about being connected**

   My assumption that a key to empowerment might lie in good practice in collaborative ministry has been challenged by what has emerged in the research. As was found in examining theoretical perspectives on both empowerment and collaborative ministry, good inter-personal, relational connections are crucial. The research also found strength among those who were in ministry because of their connections with each other. However, there was little evidence from which to discern any particular pattern of ministry and contrasting evidence of connectivity with the whole body of the church. At St David's there was functional connection across different forms of ministry in the wider church, but at All Saints, where their sense of empowerment was much weaker, there was little evidence of such connectivity and an impression of being less visible. I have concluded empowerment lies not so much in any specific pattern or structure of ministry, rather, it is in the extent to which there is connection between those who are ministering with each other and the organic body of the church to which they belong. Such connection can be found in their recognition and inclusion in various aspects of the life and ministry of the church, its worship and its teaching,

Older people can easily become invisible in the church as their ministries change with age. Their presence and contribution to the life and ministry of the church needs to be recognised and celebrated in all areas of the life and ministry of the church, including through preaching, prayer and social contact.

Using the research and learning for the future.

Research that is undertaken as part of the completion of a Professional Doctorate begins in practice experience and must inform future professional practice. To achieve this, it is expected to demonstrate three things:

- evidence of originality and independent critical judgment;
- a contribution to professional practice;
- development of professional competencies.

Originality and independent critical judgment

An aim of this research was to contribute to knowledge through a deepened understanding of older people in ministry and how that ministry might be empowered. It was an area where a gap in knowledge was established, there being research into both collaborative ministry and older people in the church, but little that considers them in combination, or that considers older people as contributors to and not just recipients of ministry. The research has explored collaborative ministry and issues of age and ageing as two strands of enquiry with the connecting concept of empowerment. It has conducted original research among older people ministering in two church contexts, with a critical, reflective view throughout. It has generated a deepened pool of knowledge and understanding about their experiences as ministers and growing older in ministry. The research established that in those two contexts older people were exercising a range of ministries, although there was some evidence that their experiences differed. Several factors contributing to their empowerment and the importance that must be attached to maintaining connection to the whole body of the church have been established.

Contribution to professional practice

The contemporary context of ministry is one in which the church has a growing population of older people on its doorstep, many of whom have never heard the Christian story. The church also faces a challenge of ageing congregations, and struggles to find strategies to meet their pastoral needs, while overlooking their capacity to be a resource for ministry. The research has shown evidence from two parish contexts that older people can be a resource to the church and can exercise ministries in a variety of ways both between peers and in intergenerational encounter. These examples can provide models for others to consider in their different contexts.

The research has gathered and presented knowledge and information that will help create better understanding of the experiences of older people in the church. It will increase

understanding of how the structures and personal relationships can impact on the confidence of older people to offer and use their gifts in the life and ministry of the church. However, deepened knowledge and understanding is not enough unless it enables others to reflect creatively on what has been learned in a way that can shape future approaches to older people in ministry and inclusive patterns of ministry. Therefore the research has examined the issue of empowerment and identified some steps to consider when looking at how older people can be empowered in the ministries they have to offer in different contexts.

Having changed role and location in ministry three times during this research journey it has been necessary to revise expectations of how the research findings might be used and disseminated. I am less likely now to be in a leadership position to influence policy and practice in an individual parish, but I have already presented findings to other churches who are considering options for their future ministry among older people and have been invited to deliver a training session. On a wider scale, the subject matter of the research is an issue that receives little if any attention in ministerial training and a proposal has been drafted to use this research to contribute to a programme of continuing ministerial development in my Diocese.

Development of professional competencies

Undertaking this research has both affirmed and increased my understanding of issues of age and ageing and renewed commitment to its application in the context of the church. It has brought new compassion and understanding to my own ageing journey and the learning from the ministries I have witnessed and testimony of the older people exercising them, encourages me to continue my journey in ministry. It has also revived my confidence in my abilities in research and presentation of findings and has empowered me to look for other ways to use these skills in similar work.

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Appendix 1

Anglia Ruskin University

Professional Doctorate in Practical Theology

Paper 1

Reflecting on Experience in Ministry:
a search for effective and inclusive collaboration

Student 0612633

Paper submitted July 2012

Contents

Abstract

Ruth Goatly

Reflecting on experience in Ministry – a search for effective and inclusive collaboration

July 2012

The initial purpose of this paper was to reflect on experiences in lay and ordained ministry within the church and to draw lessons from that for what effective collaboration might look like.

In describing the contexts of these experiences, issues of age and how the church regards older[2] people emerged as a personal and experiential factor. This raised further questions about empowerment and disempowerment in the church an in ministry. The impact of the process also exposed some anger, much of which is evidenced in its silence, but it connected with creative experience of ministry with older people and their capacity to be agents of ministry and mission. The paradox of personal disempowerment alongside empowering experiences of ministry with older people set the agenda for drawing voices from literature. Two strands of voices are considered, firstly those which speak about how older people are viewed in the church and a more substantial strand of what ministry is and factors which influence patterns of ministry which are intended to be collaborative. Although there is affirmation of older people in the church, there is little the literature offers to support an appreciation of them as ministers and those that consider patterns of ministry make little or only passing reference to age. There is similar lack of consideration of gender and both these concerns deserve much fuller consideration and enquiry in the exploration of collaborative ministry if it is to be inclusive. Issues of power are identified and threaded through experience and literature, raising questions about how power is ascribed, maintained and exercised and how it influences and limits ministry and who exercise it.

The paper concludes with identifying a need for further consideration of these key factors.

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[2] Definition of 'older' is not explored in the paper, but for this purpose an arbitrary 60+ can be assumed.

The context of Experience

My entry into what was defined as ministry in the church took place in October 2003. The journey to this point began in in late 2001, when I was 50. At the time I was in a successful career in criminal justice education and was not actively looking for change outside this area of work. However, over a period of about 18 months I explored a calling to ministry, which I assumed might lead to ordination, but was directed into lay ministry in the Anglican Church I had joined eight years earlier. Such exploration is likely to raise personal challenges including issues of self-worth, family, social and financial costs, and in my case, I struggled silently also with a sense that I was already 'too old'. Even though I was convinced by the many scriptural examples of God's calling to older people, (e.g. Abraham and Sarah, Genesis 11-12, Zechariah and Elizabeth, Luke 1; Simeon and Anna, Luke 2), I wrongly assumed my age would be a barrier to training for ordained ministry and no-one suggested otherwise.

In the eight years since 2003, I have exercised ministry in three different parish contexts in the same Diocese of the Church of England. For five years I was employed full time in stipendiary lay ministry in a post created and funded by Parish A, as a member of a newly created and commissioned Ministry and Mission Team (MMT). However, the sense of calling to ordained ministry did not go away and after completing a residential year in training, I was ordained in July 2009. Since then I have been in non-stipendiary ordained ministry, initially serving simultaneously in two parishes (Parish B, my title post and Parish C). As these are separate Parishes and licence to serve could attach only to the title post, I served voluntarily, without formal status in Parish C. In September 2011, having completed two years under this arrangement, I withdrew almost completely from the commitment to Parish C and currently serve in Parish B, in what is regarded as part-time ministry, but is rarely less than 40 hours a week.

My ministry in Parish A was in a church that had a strong history of lay involvement and leadership. It had begun as an open air mission in the early 1900s and acquired a building in the 1930s. As it grew with successful ministry among the post-war growth in its local population, it relocated to a new building, funded almost entirely through congregation fundraising. A few of its now elderly members are its history-holders, having been part of the church for more than 70 years. They had been

instrumental in its removal to its current location, contributing financially and in practical skills.

It became a parish in its own right in the late 1980s and now has an electoral roll of about 150. The development of the MMT was the initiative of its second incumbent, whose vision for the future of the church was of relational ministry, drawing in people in both lay and ordained capacities, part or full time and paid or unpaid. In the event however, the MMT comprised three members, the ordained male vicar and two paid lay ministers; one part time in youth ministry and me in full time pastoral ministry. There was little to distinguish the team from other developments of Local Ministry Teams in the Diocese except for the emphasis placed on employment contracts and covenant relationships. We were to work collaboratively under the leadership of the vicar, who regarded himself both as a team colleague and as its manager. The team was commissioned by the Archdeacon and endorsed, but never formally authorised, by the Bishop.

Parish B is a large busy parish which includes some town centre and a pre-war housing estate, but is mostly in private and relatively affluent ownership. The mid-Victorian parish church is a well-maintained, highly visible and attractive traditional church building set on the edge of moorland and canal. It also has a proud tradition of church music, with a robed choir and a new organ, for which it has intentionally allowed itself to go into substantial debt. There are two daughter churches in the parish, one of which is a 60 year old wooden hut construction with a now very small elderly congregation and a deteriorating building. The other was built in the early 1900s and has traditionally worshipped in a high Anglican-catholic tradition. The Parish has a combined electoral roll approaching 300.

The ethos of leadership under the present male incumbent is strongly clergy-led and controlled and although the parish church has an army of lay workers, it has no-one in a formal lay ministry role since the elderly Reader retired three years ago. For the first two years of my ministry there, I served alongside a stipendiary curate, who was also serving a title post. I was appointed as an additional part-time curate under a house for duty arrangement, created to secure occupancy of a vacant property rented by the church. But for the issue with property, the post would not have existed and will cease in this form when and if the church has a new stipendiary curate.

Until April 2011 there was a non-stipendiary priest in the third church in the parish, who was part of our ministry team, but whom I never formally met. He worked full time in a secular post and served in the church on Sundays. The church functioned unilaterally and had been allowed to exercise male-only sacramental ministry under the provisions of resolutions of The Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1992. In April 2011 the priest and about half the congregation left the Anglican Church to join the Catholic Ordinariate and the parish resumed responsibility for the church and pastoral care of the remaining congregation under the leadership of the vicar. Although the resolutions had no legal effect within the Parish governance structures, it was decided, with the Bishop's blessing and direction, to continue the established worship tradition, served by male-only priests. I am still not permitted to exercise a sacramental ministry there but carry an increased workload in the other two churches to enable the male vicar to contribute to its continuing in this way.

Parish C is about 3 miles from Parish B, comprising two 1970s estates geographically isolated from the town. It includes a significant proportion of social housing and a mixed socio-economic demography with small pockets of deprivation as defined by the Social Deprivation Index and an inaccurate reputation as an unsafe area to live in. The church is virtually invisible behind local shops and integral with a community centre complex. It began as a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) of Anglican, Baptist and United Reformed Churches. For a time it had both Anglican and Baptist ministers serving together, but although still an LEP, it is now served only by an Anglican vicar. This Parish is in a Team Ministry, comprising five churches in four parishes, each with an ordained priest, under the leadership of the Team Rector. The female incumbent of Parish C was appointed the Team Rector in 2010.

The church shares its worship space with a Roman Catholic congregation and although services are held separately, there is a common altar for the celebration of Mass and Eucharist and some shared social activities. It has a membership of about 50. The ministry of lay people is actively encouraged and includes a Reader, who until recently also had been employed as their part-time children's worker and a locally ordained Children's Minister from a Black Pentecostal Church in Boston, USA, authorised by the Bishop to lead a monthly Free Church Communion. The incumbent expresses commitment to inclusivity, drawing laity into active roles in all

aspects of church life and there have been some new forms of worship and 'Fresh Expressions' of church initiated as a result.

Reflecting on Experience

Summarising my experience in this way has been both practically challenging and emotionally draining. Reducing it to its chronology and outline context leaves little room to express the impact of experience, and what has emerged after many attempts and revisions is a sanitised version, safe enough to tell, but resounding with silenced anger, disappointment and frustration. I emerged from my time in Parish A into theological college a hurt and angry person and chose to explore my journey thus far through MA Dissertation in a deliberate attempt to understand why ministry had left someone who was a confident and competent person feeling so 'dismantled' and disempowered (Goatly 2010). The experience of being ordained was joyful and liberating, but the path since has been challenging and discouraging and I find I have been asking many of the same questions again.

My initial intention was to explore through experience what might be good practice and what might challenge effective collaborative ministry. I was in a privileged position to do so have experience in both lay and ordained ministry in three quite different contexts. But two key issues have emerged which have preoccupied my thinking and hindered, sometimes blocked, progress. One, which might have been expected, but would contribute creatively to the exploration, is to unpack my understanding of ministry. The other, more emotive and personally challenging; is that of age and ageing. It has been much more difficult to untangle how much of the anger and frustration is about the contexts, past and present, and how much is my own personal struggle with journeying into age. Issues of age have echoed at each point of my engagement with ministry from exploration of calling and through the paths that have been opened to me. Despite a firm intention to reflect on experience objectively, I cannot do so without acknowledging that at times this has brought me into touch with a profound sense of loss of worth and future, now compounded by being in a Diocese where the age profile of clergy is openly regarded as a problem. Age did not prohibit me from seeking ordination, although had new guidelines recently introduced in our Diocese been in place then, it would have done. However, age has been, as far as I can tell, a primary reason for not considering me for a stipendiary post.

Anger has bubbled to the surface as a powerful response to reflecting on experience and proved exhausting and at times personally disempowering. But anger, as Wildung Harrison asserts is 'always a vivid form of caring' and 'a signal that change is called for, that transformation in relation is required' (Wildung Harrison, 1990p198). Her thesis that properly understood anger has a 'rightful place within the work of love' re-connected me with some of my experience in Parish A which has taken on increasing significance. Emphasis there on 'moving forward' as a church and on younger people and families seemed to deny the needs and place of older people, among whom much of my ministry was focused. Often I felt vulnerable and powerless and my work marginalised, even invisible and I came to understand how this reflected a common experience of ageing. I had not anticipated or planned for this focus in ministry, yet I came to embrace it with anger turned to unexpected passion, both in valuing the lives of the people I worked alongside and in what they had to offer to the church as a wise, creative and vibrant resource. It happened as I channelled energy and frustration into a story-sharing group project whose members were all over 70, which had a dynamic impact in the life of the church. I look back on that now as personally empowering and enriching, but much more significantly as witness to both the value of older people as members of the church community and their capacity to be agents of ministry and mission.

One of the things that drove my calling to ministry was a desire to enable people to find a sense of belonging within the church, and critically in relationship to God. My transition to ordained ministry was influenced in part by a desire to be able to exercise a sacramental ministry of priest as a part of that search for belonging. I have no regrets about making that transition, but the relationship with congregations and local communities inevitably differs and I miss the freedom I had in lay ministry to be innovative and proactive in those relationships. My current experience is leading me to a view that ordained ministry has meant a narrowing rather than opening of paths and relationships in ministry and that feels an uncomfortable statement and position to be in.

As I have reflected further on that and on what ministry means to me, I realise the experiences and how I have encountered them have been shaped also by having been brought up in the Baptist tradition. As a child I had a taught respect for the 'Minister' who I understood to be called by God first and then by the church to its leading and pastorate. From early days therefore I associated the language of

ministry with ordination even though the priesthood of all believers is a defining Baptist principle. My parents and several other family members held key lay positions in the running of the church but that was never spoken of as ministry, rather the responsibility and privilege of being good church members.

The establishment of the MMT in Parish A was a deliberate attempt to draw on the principles of all-member ministry and had some resonance with that early experience. It came with an emphasis on gifting and commission of the baptised and was intended to be collaborative and empowering of all. Those of us in lay posts in the MMT had role descriptions with responsibility to empower others in their ministries. There were inevitable challenges in our efforts to put this vision into practice and I struggled with a lack of clarity over the relationship between roles and how my role as a lay person in ministry fitted with intra and inter church structures. The influence of power, gender and theology on our relationships within the team could not be ignored, but perhaps I did not give sufficient weight to a lingering sense, seemingly endorsed by attitudes of others, that 'proper' ministry was the preserve of the ordained.

In retrospect and with the contrast of present experience of clergy-dominated leadership in Parish B, I find the vision for shared ministry in Parish A more convincing as a way forward. While laity and clergy are working within the same church in Parish B, there is little sense of working together or evidence of laity who feel empowered, equipped or even eligible for ministry. There is an implicit sense of hierarchy which also affects how I have experienced being a non-stipendiary curate such that when the stipendiary curate left there were several in the congregation who expressed concern about no longer having a curate. At the same time the experience in Parish C, a context in which I felt much more at home, was more liberating and initially I was both encouraged and in sympathy with the intention to inclusivity. But I discovered there a more subtle, but effective, way of ordering relationships through such mechanisms as over-effusive thanks for help given to the vicar. Others among the laity with whom I worked to develop new forms of worship and activities with the community seem to have had similar experiences.

Looking back I can see critical points of corporate and personal empowerment and disempowerment and of feeling energised and depleted in both lay and ordained ministry. I have not yet felt as empowered, nor as empowering of others in ordained

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ministry as I did in that time of working with the story-sharing group, but it would be dishonest not to acknowledge the effort it took to ignore the assumptions of others that people in that age group had little to offer and that my ministry would be better focused on their pastoral care. It leaves me with something of a paradox that demands further attention in that whilst I have found ministry with older people mutually enriching and empowering, my own experience as an older person going into ministry has been at times both discouraging and disempowering.

Voices from the literature

To help unravel some of this paradox in experience, I turn to two sets of voices from the literature: firstly those that examine the issue of ageing and the role of older people in the church, and then those that explore the more substantive issue of what ministry is and how patterns of ministry work.

Older people and the church

One of the strongest voices that challenge the church to value its older members is that of James Woodward and his association with the Leveson Centre for the Study of Spirituality and Ageing. In his book 'Valuing Age' (Woodward 2008), he seeks to help those involved in a range of settings to understand some of the pastoral questions and issues that older people face. It is not intended to offer a model of ministry by older people, but it is helpful in that it promotes a more holistic understanding of the possibilities and potential of older people and what society and the church can gain from valuing age. It explores the biological realities of ageing and how some of the spiritual and physical needs that come with that might be met. It also sets this reality in the context of social and cultural expectations and assumptions about age and briefly touches on ageist attitudes in churches that regard an ageing congregation as a problem and leads older members to feel marginalised and tolerated rather than valued. There is much in this book that resonates with my experience and by extension I would argue can be applied to the experience of both lay and ordained ministers. However, other than promoting positive images and challenging stereotypes, it does little to address the challenge to acknowledge the existence of ageism within the church in the first place.

Woodward argues that a model of ageing which focuses on need is less likely to encourage change and development, or a presumption of possibility. He highlights

how a tendency among pastors to assume diminution of intellectual capacity or ability to learn leads to low expectations of older members of congregations and affects their ability to live creatively (Woodward 2008p21). I recognise this tendency and would certainly agree that such attitudes can contribute to lack of confidence or sense of being a valued member of the community which is not a good basis from which to thrive in life or in ministry.

Towards the end of his book Woodward pulls some of the threads of his arguments together to consider theology of ageing in which the uniqueness and value of individual story, with all its experiences, good or bad is what we each offer our creator. He sees a temptation in the individual is to say 'I am what I was', yet when the time comes we will be welcomed home not because of what have been but because of what we are. Thus he sees the primary task of the last period of life a spiritual one of integration and regrets that possibility of spiritual growth is often discounted in older people. This I would argue is also evidenced on a community level within our churches where older members are often referred to as people who 'used to be' and they will often assume that label, which I suspect further disempowers and limits the potential they might otherwise have to minister among others as they negotiate the journey.

Much of what Woodward says rings true with my experience of the story group in Parish A, for whom I discovered my primary task was to empower them to believe they each had a unique and valuable story tell. We sought to find creative ways of telling the stories through written and oral sharing and an annual interactive exhibition to which in the third year over six hundred schoolchildren and adult visitors came. Personal and faith stories were shared which was affirming and spiritually encouraging for them. But it also created links with the community around them that enabled them to go on telling their stories. Discovering they had a voice was energising and had an impact which rewardingly far exceeded the expectations of others in the church of what this small group of elderly people could offer and achieve. However, the confidence and effort required in undertaking such an initiative in the face of doubts and low expectations of others should not be underestimated: they are starting from a low level of power within the organisation and the dynamics of power in ageism, as with any other form of discrimination, needs to be properly understood. Ironically, this may be more challenging in

churches where the rhetoric is of all having a share in the ministry and mission of God, while in reality the potential of some groups is discounted or unrecognised.

The importance of listening to the voices of older people themselves is implicit throughout Woodward's book which is threaded through with pen pictures of individuals and groups from whose experience lessons can be drawn. However, he says little about how to take advantage of this within the life of the church, apart from some very helpful practical ideas about worship. He does not seek to argue that presenting stories is itself a solution, a view I would endorse, but I am increasingly grieved by the lack of time and attention given even to listening to each other enough to hear each other's stories in our churches. Even well created opportunities may not be enough as another author, Light (2011) found in the challenge she experienced of giving voice to older people especially over matters of faith. She attributed this in part to a cultural sense of faith as a 'private matter'. Her experience at the Great Hospital, where the church constituency was predominantly older people, avoided the issue that many churches will face where such reluctance might be coupled with a belief that it is more important to focus on younger people as the future of the church.

So I turn briefly to other studies which have sought to give voice to older people. The work of Albert Jewell and others who are associated with the work of the Methodist Homes Association provide a rich resource of literature that considers aspects of ageing and spirituality (Jewell, ed, 1999, Knox, 2002, Jewell, ed, 2004), but one study that explicitly seeks to listen to the voice of older people is Hawley and Jewell's 'A crying in the wilderness' (2009). They begin by acknowledging a legitimate concern for churches posed by an ageing society and congregations but see a tendency resulting from this to focus on how ministry can engage with younger people both in the way it is exercised and those who are engaged in it. Consequently once again, the needs of older people and their potential as ministers can be overlooked and marginalised.

Hawley and Jewell suggest the word ministry is 'still largely associated in many people's minds with those who are ordained to minister' (2009 p58) and echo the issue already identified that they do not readily see themselves as engaged in ministry or eligible to minister. However they highlight several different aspects of ministry to which older people routinely contribute including hospitality, prayer

and care, mentoring and ministry beyond the church by their volunteering and presence in the community. These are resources of ministry without which the church cannot survive and they need to be recognised and used to the full. Whilst there is pragmatic sense in this, my argument would be that such ministry deserves to be recognised and valued in its own right and not simply because it is expedient to the smooth running of the organisation. There have been many times when I have seen the contribution to the life of the church made by its older members taken for granted or worse not recognised at all. For their part it is hard to say whether they would call what they do ministry or rather simply helping the vicar in theirs, a view Hawley and Jewell suggest seems all too often to be reinforced by the attitude of clergy.

Ministry and patterns of ministry

The second strand of the paradox is the issue of ministry itself and especially patterns of ministry that engage both ordained and laity. Ministry as I have noted, was associated in my young mind as the work of the ordained. By the time I journeyed into lay ministry in the church, I was convinced that ministry is neither confined to the work of the ordained, nor within the boundaries of the church, but I discovered similar assumptions still existed both among colleagues in the secular world and among some in the church. Now, as I reflect on it again from the perspective of an ordained person, I have become aware of a subtle temptation to adopt behaviour of status even though I profess a commitment to equality. The fact that labels are attached at all suggests difference and in reality there is an implicit hierarchy operating in our churches which values some ministries more than others. There may be generational or cultural elements to this, but the influence of power and place cannot be discounted. This is a complex issue that involves both actual and imputed authority and will affect how we ourselves label what we do and whether we feel empowered in it.

A now rather dated study of shared ministry by Smith (1979), looked at 130 'ministering congregations' in the United Presbyterian Church and suggested that active engagement in ministries outside the church congregation directly influences significant ministries among each other inside. Among the factors that he found might empower and encourage ministry are a strong sense of belonging to the church community and commitment to shared ministry, with a collegial style of

leadership that allows lay ministers to flourish, or if necessary fail without 'stepping in'. Many of the underlying assumptions and characteristics identified by Smith were present in my experience in Parish A with the development of the MMT, in particular commitment to all being empowered to minister and an emphasis on discernment of gifting; but the challenges he identifies to a truly shared ministry echo most strongly. He suggests there may be a corporate struggle to overcome expectations and generations of assumptions about ministry to grasp a vision of partnership and also that '(a) truly shared ministry requires high level of personal security not to be threatened by strong lay leaders, to be willing to give up need for control, and to be willing not to be involved in everything that goes on in the congregation" (Smith 1979p344-5). I saw this at first hand and tended to think gender was the primary factor in this, but I have come to see it as more complex than that and have also recognised the part played by power and our different theologies and ecclesiologies.

The two main texts that I have chosen consider more fully and to listen to what they can offer towards an understanding of the issues involved are Stephen Pickard, Theological Foundations for Collaborative Ministry (2009) and David Heywood, Reimagining Ministry (2011).

Pickard begins by asserting that ministry is the vocation of the whole people of God and collaboration in ministry might be expected to be a natural characteristic of discipleship; a concept and ideal I find attractive and persuasive. However he argues it encounters particular problems when given 'churchy reference' and a bifurcation of ministry and work (Pickard 2009 p44ff). Immediately I am reminded that I considered, and was encouraged to consider, I was 'going into ministry' when I left my secular career but frequently now seek to encourage others to see what they do in everyday life wherever that might be as fulfilling their callings to be part of the mission of God in the world. I find it helpful, but challenging, to follow his analysis further as he examines the distinction between ontological and functional emphases in ministry, the former stemming from Catholic and the latter Protestant roots and theologies. I can see experience of each in Parish B and Parish A respectively, and recall the emphasis placed on ontological change in my preparation for ordination. Collaboration, Pickard suggests, is not intrinsic to either approach and any moves towards it encounter both systemic and practical challenges. He identifies a 'pervasive and persistent problem of clericalism' (Pickard 2009 p158) which plays

into hierarchical assumptions and makes true collaboration difficult to negotiate. Thus power is a key issue and he would argue collaboration in ministry needs to transcend both autocratic and submissive styles of leadership. A way through these challenges to collaboration is to see ordination afresh, as transformative, in that it creates a new set of relations in ministry both for the individual and whole church community. Rather than setting apart, he would promote an understanding of ordination setting within new relationships in which the ordained are called to exercise particular responsibilities and functions within the wider body of the church.

Reading and re-reading Pickard's work, I have become both energised and depressed. I am convinced of the importance of what he talks of as ministries of the people, rooted in a doctrine of creation, ministry inextricably linked with baptism, but know from the reality of experience how hard it is to encounter comparative distinctions and separations in practice. It was a clear part of the message preached by the Archdeacon at the commissioning of the MMT that our baptism is our ordination into ministry and it sounded authentic and affirming. Yet in practice I experienced an internal struggle to function without some formal label that conveyed a sense of changed place in the structure of the organisation and an external lack of recognition of me as a minister especially among those ordained in the same denomination. It led me to believe there was a problem of legitimacy in my ministry that I felt helpless to address and its influence on some of my relationships had disempowering effect. Therefore I see truth in what Pickard describes as a 'long standing war of attrition' between clerical and laity over ministry (Pickard 2009 p232) and want to embrace his thesis that although ministry is the function of the whole body of the church, failure to clarify relationships between ministries and establish a pattern of collaboration in which all are enhanced rather than some diminished by others, weakens the whole church in fulfilling its mission.

At times as I have listened to this voice, whilst it has served to increase my understanding of the influences in the contexts in which I have worked, it has heightened my sense of the very real challenges there are to true collaborative ministry and served to diminish my hope for change in the future. It has challenged me to reflect on how I function in hierarchy, whether overt or hidden, and how that too has the potential to empower or disempower. I have come to realise with increasing sense of disappointment that my present context offers little to support collaborative ministry and issues of power and how it is exercised affect the

behaviour of both lay and ordained within it. Pickard's attention to issues of power in unpacking this is helpful, but I cannot discount the influence and dynamic of gender, which has been evident in my experience of both lay and ordained ministry and has painfully compounded the challenges to effective collaboration.

Pickard does not consider issues of gender in ministry directly, except in considering relational ontology of orders within churches where he suggests a 'full relational ontology of orders may actually require both women and men to share in orders' (Pickard,2009p163). Similarly he makes few, if any references to the other strand of my experience, older people in ministry. The closest perhaps, is in the text of a sermon on Team Ministry for Mission, which is recorded towards the end of the book in which he speaks of ministries belonging to the whole body, consistent with the gospel imperative, inextricably linked with each other, and nourishing each other. Thus '(w)e dare not amputate ourselves off from the body of Christ by failing to see the ministries we exercise as part of each other' (Pickard 2009 p230). He uses the image of a fern to illustrate this – with the outer, older fronds, brown and losing lustre, further in those stronger and in full bloom while at the centre are the newest, full of potential that will grow and continue the life of the fern, and in the process feed from the nutrients of the older fronds. So too he says in the body of Christ are older, mature and emergent ministries which belong together so that under the right condition the body flourishes. This is both a helpful in that it gives value to the older ministries but it also carries with it a passivity of role and perhaps some unhelpful descriptions of what is 'older'.

The second voice is that of David Heywood's, 'Reimagining Ministry' (2011), which focuses more on understanding ministry in practice. His central theme is that a prevailing model of 'professional ministry' is dysfunctional and outdated and needs to become mission-centred, with an emphasis on lifetime discipleship. He argues ministry as participation of the whole church in the mission of God need not, and does not undermine the ministry of the ordained, but does require leaders who are able to recognise and affirm the gifts and vocations of others to the empowerment of the whole church. He, like Pickard, places emphasis on the relational nature of ordained ministry and makes passing reference to the tension between functional and ontological approaches. He would agree that ordination should be understood as placing the ordained in a new relationship, such that leadership is not merely a task but is exercised through the way the task is carried out.

Heywood is particularly concerned to examine church structures and their influence on the way ministry is exercised, an approach that I find engaging as issues of how I could locate myself within church structure exercised me greatly in lay ministry. He suggests that in practice the way ministry is worked out in the Church of England, lay ministry still is seen as auxiliary to stipendiary clergy and 'full time professional ministry' is what is seen as 'real'. Interestingly he makes only one reference to non-stipendiary ministry and that to note 'complaints voiced in some quarters about the perceived lack of training for non-stipendiary and locally ordained clergy.' (Heywood, 2011p4). He defines ministry in the professional model as those things that clergy do: preach, lead services and exercise pastoral care (Heywood,2011 p 11), offering building and services to a largely passive laity and limits the function of lay ministry to fulfil tasks required to maintain church life. He suggests such task-focused ministry narrows discipleship of those in such functional roles and is not conducive to faith development of the whole body. I can identify with this most clearly in my current context, and would add that it makes building a sense of community and belonging difficult, something I have begun to see as a critical step in empowering for ministry.

By contrast, Heywood suggests, mission-centred reimagined ministry supports an understanding of ministry that is exercised by all throughout life. His argument for a mission-focused model of ministry takes it outside the boundaries of church to a way of living in the community and through every aspect of life relationships. Thus it may re-shape the relationship between church and community from one of maintaining institutional presence to serving in the community. Once again this reflects the contrast of experience between Parish B and Parish A, and also to some extent Parish C. It helps me to clarify my understanding and to want to distance myself from the professional model of my present context in Parish B. At the same time, a mission-focused model which was evident in the development of the MMT in Parish A, is not without challenge and difficulty. Despite the ideal, for example, the reality was that the measures used for success were still about the success of the institution in numbers attending church rather than the less tangible impact on lives of people in the community.

Heywood acknowledges his reimagined ministry is bound to challenge inherited structures and a mindset that sees ministry as the preserve of bishops, priests and deacons. But, he argues, cultivating a habit of reflection in ministry may help counter this by encouraging systematic questioning of both the status quo and

institutional structures of power. Once again the significance of power is raised and resistance is considered likely in hierarchical organisations, such as the church, requiring surrender of power, most particularly from the clergy. Whilst I agree with the logic of this, I would argue it is more complex than letting go of status and power, but requires cultural change among both clergy and laity.

Heywood offers little specifically to identify and address issues of gender in ministry, except to note that Jesus' ministry broke through the sharp differentiation of race, gender and religious practice. Nor does he make any reference to older people in his new model of church and ministry, but by implication, since the emphasis is so strongly on the ministry of all, perhaps he would not see it necessary to include or exclude anyone from his analysis.

Conclusion and next steps

It was not accidental that ministry was qualified at the beginning of this Paper as 'in the church'. This was not to deny or devalue ministry which takes place outside the church, in communities, work and life relationships, since I would define ministry as the activity of all who are part of the whole body of Christ and not the preserve of place, role or status. I have turned some stones of personal history and experience to re-affirm this definition but through reflection have recognised some inherited assumptions, context culture and language still at work to make this a concept which challenges both ordained and laity.

My experience moving from a professional context of work into the church brought me into conflict with structures and relationships which suggest the ideal of collaborative ministry challenges both the individual and the church corporate to renegotiate and let go power, assumptions and tradition. Some of the questions raised for effective collaborative ministry cannot be separated from issues of power and how it is ascribed, maintained and exercised. As a woman in ministry I have encountered issues of gender in that which have been given little if any attention in the literature I have drawn on. As someone who is by definition now an 'older person' I have recognised boundaries this creates in ministry and have experienced anger and disempowerment as a result. But I have linked that also to some experiences in ministry in which I have paradoxically discovered enrichment and empowerment through the creative ministry of older people.

The voices I have chosen to listen to have affirmed the importance of valuing older people and what they have to offer the church and explored some of the challenges

to ministry which seeks to be collaborative. Issues of power lie within both these strands of consideration, operating to disempower through discriminatory assumptions of ageism and through hierarchies and cultures in the church. Neither are one dimensional and both require further exploration of how power impacts on behaviour and response in these contexts and approaches to ministry.

This together with further exploration of empowerment and disempowerment in and for ministry are avenues which seem most worthy of further exploration and raise key questions for effective collaboration.

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Anglia Ruskin University

Professional Doctorate in Practical Theology

Paper 2

The Challenges of Ageism to Empowering Ministries of Older People in the Church

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Contents

ABSTRACT

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The Challenges of Ageism to Empowering Ministries of Older People in the Church

July 2013

Drawing on experience in lay and ordained ministry this paper explores what ageism looks like in the church and how it is impinges on the ministries open to and exercised by older people. Using a sociological model, developed in social work, issues and processes of discrimination are identified and shown to operate at all levels. Experiences of ageism are found to affect personal dignity, identity, sense of purpose and spiritual well-being. It is one factor that will affect whether older people are seen as agents or merely recipients of ministry. It cannot be considered without reference to other forms of discrimination and power.

The challenge that emerges for the church is complex as it seeks to tread a path between striving to be a community in which every individual is empowered and the needs of each are met, without leaving some feeling they are a burden and others their continuing capacity to contribute is excluded. Whilst there is some recognition that older people bring to the church a richness of gifts and experience which can enhance the life of the community, they are stifled by ageism and it is concluded there is clear need to develop models of good practice for the empowerment of these ministries.

The conversation went something like this:

'I was a little disappointed in part of the report as it seemed to suggest we are not doing anything for older people whereas in fact we are doing a lot in our ministry to them. Over coffee people were chatting and discovered that was indeed the case. But I am interested in your study about ageism in the church because it is something I have not encountered'.

It was with the chair of a committee who had produced a report on ministry among older people. Ordained in ministry for some years and now approaching retirement, she had previously worked in elderly adult care. Her ability to point to a range of ministry initiatives 'to' older people was, she considered, evidence of the absence of ageism. Having been convinced through experience in ministry that ageism is an issue that disempowers many in the church, I had hoped to find some common ground with potential for further research. I left disappointed and momentarily wondering whether I had got it all wrong after all.

I entered ministry in the church in 2003 and for five years worked in full time stipendiary lay ministry as a member of a ministry team. This initiative was a deliberate attempt to practice collaborative ministry with a theological basis in covenant relationships both within the team and with the church community. It was intended to promote and empower the ministry of all. I reflected on that experience and some of the issues it raised in detail elsewhere (Goatly, 2010) and initially intended to draw on that to explore what good practice in collaborative ministry might look like.

However, it was not long before the focus of reflection shifted toward ministry with older people and identified a pivotal question: why was it that experience of ministry with older people had been energising and empowering of both them and myself and yet my own experience as an older person going into ministry in the church had been disempowering and left me feeling depleted. As I dug a little beneath the surface it proved impossible to get beyond a core issue of how age and ageing affects the ministries people are able to exercise and how age itself is perceived to be a problem for the church. It identified a need to go further into understanding ageism within the church. Therefore the task of this paper is to delve deeper into what ageism looks like in the church and to dialogue with that. Some issues of power and gender will be explored where they relate to this, and establish a basis from which in time models of empowerment of older people in the church can be developed.

Age and ageing are both universal in experience from birth, but with impact that is neither uniform, nor predictable. Age is biological, measured chronologically, physiological and social, reflected in attitudes and behaviour regarded as appropriate for chronological age. Ageing is a process of growing older, with arbitrary points of chronological age marking progression from one stage to another, and which carry labels we encounter with different emotion. I acknowledged elsewhere (Goatly, 2012), my reflection on experiences was through a lens coloured by anger, disappointment and hurt, and blurred by a sense of marginalisation, vulnerability and rejection. All these are qualities of experience routinely identified in studies of ageism and experiences of older people (Nouwen and Gaffney, 1990; Knox 2002; Bytheway, 1995; Thompson, 2005; Woodward, 2008)

It is important to acknowledge that ageism is not age-specific; age is a social division and discrimination can occur because of youth or old age and points in between. However, this paper focuses on ageism as it affects older people, for this purpose taken to be people over the age of 60 and an experience which is contextually shaped by being in ministry in the church. Although it is urged to work as a body of many interdependent parts of equal value (1 Corinthians 12), the church has great difficulty acknowledging the existence and evidence of any form of discrimination within it (Bagihole, 2006; Hampson, 2006; Merchant, 2011). Yet mention among peers that this study concerns ageism has been greeted with encouragement for something that is much needed, my earlier conversation aside. Whilst there have been a number of studies recently focusing on spiritual needs and ministry among older people which touch on ageism (Knox 2002; Jewell, 2004; Collyer, et al. 2008; Woodward, 2008; Hawley and Jewell, 2009) there is little in them about ministries exercised *by* older people and none devoted exclusively to that.

During the first five years of church ministry my work was channelled mostly into pastoral ministry among older people, something I neither expected nor initially welcomed. However I discovered a passion for that ministry and among other initiatives developed an intergenerational story and faith sharing project. It was intended to be a means of strengthening ministry among older people, build their sense of belonging to the church community and draw on the resources they offered for ministry within it. It began when I brought together people I was visiting to listen to each other's stories. There was richness in them that had much to offer each other and the church. It quickly grew into a project to share their stories in creative ways through recording, transcribing into books and an annual interactive exhibition open to all, but

to which local schools were invited and came in great numbers. It proved personally enriching but also stood as testimony to the capacity of older members to exercise ministry and contribute to the mission of the church (Goatly, 2008). I then went into ordained ministry, by which time I was 57 and was brought up against barriers to the forms of ministry open to me. I was appointed to a non-stipendiary role largely, so far as I could tell, on the grounds of age. Later on I was to discover how close age had come to preventing me from being ordained at all and currently prevents others still in their early 50s from being considered for ordination in my Diocese.

So I return to the paradox in experience that found ministry among older people empowering and yet my own experience going into ministry disempowering, and the need to understand how ageism impacts on these experiences and the church.

Discovering Ageism

The word ageism was first put on the agenda in the late 1960s (Bytheway, 1995), due to the work of an American psychiatrist Robert Butler. It emerged from studies of contested proposals to use a high-rise development as homes for older people. The complex had swimming pool and parking facilities, which local residents protested were not necessary for older residents. As he developed his work Butler highlighted both the process of systematic stereotyping on the grounds of age and the outcome of social division so "younger generations .. see older people as different to themselves, (and) subtly cease to identify with their elders as human beings" (Butler and Lewis, 1973 cited in Bytheway, 1995, p.30). While Butler's work was influential in getting ageism into the vocabulary, its effect was little more than creating an 'enlightened prejudice' (Bytheway 1995, p.30): although awareness of the issue had been raised it made little difference in practice to prejudiced behaviour.

It perhaps is not surprising that much of the work on defining ageism is associated with the study and practice of health and social care. In essence it is simply "discrimination or unfair treatment based on a person's age" (AgeUK, 2013), but it can impact at a macro level on policy including allocation of resources and the micro level of personal experience, self-confidence and sense of well-being (Hughes and Mtezuka, 1992; Bytheway, 1995; Hughes, 1995, Thompson, 2005).

The study of ageing and ageism began to be recognised in sociological discourse and research in the latter part of the twentieth century. Social policy research on ageing was more developed, but tended to be problem-focused either in terms of problems

encountered by older people or of older people as a socio-economic issue and challenge for policy-makers. Recent evidence concerning an ageing population in the UK has again raised this as a contentious contemporary issue (Warnes,1996; Smethurst, 2012; Jowit, 2013; House of Lords, 2013).

I first became aware of ageism as a practice issue when teaching in social work and criminal justice in the late 1980s. The new qualification for social work required assessment in anti-discriminatory practice as a component for good practice. A number of academic books were produced (Dominelli, 1988; Thompson, 1992; Langham and Day, 1992; Dalrymple and Burke, 1995) and a sociological model, the 'PCS' model (Thompson, 1992), became popular learning. The model demonstrated that discrimination operates on a personal level (P), frequently manifested as prejudice, often based on stereotypes; on a cultural level (C) through commonly held assumptions reinforced through language; and in structural processes (S) including the distribution of power and resources. Although Thompson described the levels as embedded one in the other, the dynamic interconnection and influences operating between them also needed to be appreciated, something he has developed further since with particular reference to dynamics of power and ideology (Thompson, 2011). Thompson has noted critics have questioned the absence of a 'community level' in the model, but argues community "is a place where personal, cultural and structural issues will all feature (and is…) a potential site of discrimination, rather than a conceptual level at which discrimination operates" (Thompson, 2012, p.40). I have worked with the model in teaching and in reflective practice and found it both challenging and stimulating. It has much to offer this exploration of what ageism looks like in the church community and therefore is used as its framework.

The personal level
Here the focus is on personal thoughts, attitudes and actions, and in particular prejudices. These are often difficult to identify, but can be glimpsed in behaviour, for example evident irritation at slowness or more blatant avoidance, or in language, such as the use of demeaning terms like 'the old dears' or 'wrinklies who sit at the back'. It may be unintentional but unmistakably expressed, as a colleague who in an unguarded moment explained a decision not to join an outing with 'who wants to sit on a coach with smelly old ladies!'

Prejudice may be associated with negative experiences, fear or ignorance and in ageism with something which brings us face to face with our own mortality, fear of illness and frailty (Nouwen and Gaffney, 1990, Knox, 2002; Morisy, 2011). Being the object of prejudiced attitudes and behaviour can result in low self-esteem, lower morale and sapped confidence, and internalised prejudice may lead to denial of age (Knox, 2002;), sense of being deficient (Morisy, 2011), rejection or segregation as "one of the most powerful factors in making many of the elderly feel like unwanted hangers-on" (Nouwen and Gaffrey, 1990p.35).

My group of story tellers illustrated the importance of building confidence in their identity as older people with stories to tell, and over time it helped nurture a sense of purpose and meaning that moved from lived experiences to more spiritual or faith questions. They needed little encouragement to share their stories with each other, but considerably more to 'go public' with their first book and exhibition. They thought of themselves as people who 'had been' and doubted anyone would be interested in them. I deliberately worked with an empowerment model of practice which sees the worker as facilitator rather than an external expert imposing solutions, and one in which partnership is key (Thompson, 1995), and discovered that ageism can operate to make this more difficult both because of the reduced expectations they had learned to have of themselves and an internalised sense (and some experience) of no-one wanting to listen because they were old.

The importance of understanding the link between spirituality and equality, and its relevance at all three levels of analysis has been helpfully explored by Moss and Thompson (2007) and at the personal level may directly affect a sense of identity and meaning. Other authors have endorsed this and have explored practical approaches to nurturing a sense of purpose, meaning and spiritual growth (MacKinlay, 2001, Jewell 2004; Woodward, 2008), some with particular reference to those living with dementia (MacKinlay, 2006; Morse and Hitchings, 2008; Swinton, 2012).

These kinds of issues are complex and open up bigger theological questions of who I have been, am now and will be. Paul Tournier speaks of stages of being in which younger people find identity through what they do, whereas in older years function ceases to be the defining factor and we become what we are (Tournier, 1972). All, young and old, are created in the image of God and yet in our Western societies are caught in a seemingly relentless search to create our own image, status and achievement. Yet ultimately as Woodward observes, " (t)his uniqueness that is me is

what I have been, is what I have to offer to my Creator, who knows me infinitely better than I know myself, and who graciously welcomes me home, not in spite of what I have been, but because of what I am" (Woodward, 2008, p. 195). It may be that release from the challenge to maintain activity may create opportunity to engage with such questions of purpose and meaning of life (Morrisy, 2011), but "one of the spiritual tasks of later life (remains) to tell our story, in the context of approaching the last career of life, preparing to die. This is where we can come to know the final meaning of our lives" (MacKinlay, 2004).

I am reminded of observations by some older people I have visited on how little they hear preached in churches about death, and yet that is something we all must face. In a death-denying Western world, the idea of death challenges us within the church and outside it. Yet in contrast to fear, loneliness and separation associated with death in the secular world the Christian story gives it meaning (Morisy, 2011). Moreover the process of dying "is a deeply meaningful and spiritual human experience within which the search for God, meaning, hope, purpose, forgiveness and even salvation should be seen as central to the tasks of end-of-life care". (Swinton and Payne, 2009, p.xviii).

More generally, there may be some evidence of the link between religion and well-being in later life, but it is not unequivocal and even if accepted, the contemporary interest in spirituality raises questions about whether it is achieved necessarily through involvement in church. Nevertheless it challenges churches to reflect on their practice of ministry among older people and how well and how far the contribution of older people to the spiritual nurturing and life of the community is acknowledged (Howse, 1999; Board of Education, 2012).)

The cultural level
Prejudice also operates at this level, but the focus is more on consensus about what is 'normal' or 'taken for granted assumptions' (Thompson, 2012). Stereotypical assumptions applied to older people might include inactivity, dependence or likelihood of ill health. An individual who does not possess such characteristics is considered to be an exception or 'doing well for their age'. Like prejudice, negative stereotypes have been shown directly to affect a sense of wellbeing, motivation or flourishing in later life (Levy, Ashman and Dror, 2000; Hall 2012), something I was reminded of in the most recent AGM of my church during discussion about church growth when one member declared: 'just look at us – all over 70 (*not true*), what good are we - who would want

to come here anyway'. Equally, what might be regarded as positive stereotypes can be disempowering as for example a 'caring grandma', who then becomes trapped in a role of informal carer (Vincent, 1999).

Although ageism as a universal experience may be distinguished from other forms of discrimination, the biologically determined process occurs within a social framework of cultural norms and expectations. What is considered an acceptable role or behaviour of an older person is likely to differ from a younger person but may vary between cultures (Thompson, 2005; Woodward, 2008) and there may be historical and cultural ambivalence about the value of physical strength and beauty associated with young or wisdom associated with age (Scrutton, 1990). Similarly, although it is possible to point to biblical endorsement of the value and respect for wisdom of age, there is also recognition of struggle and intergenerational conflict in attitudes to age (Board of Responsibility 1990, pp.36-42).

In Thompson's analysis humour is regarded a common vehicle for discrimination at the cultural level. Birthday card jokes and cartoons are particularly linked with ageism, something from which even the Church Times is not immune (Morisy, 2011, p.181). Midwinter (1990a) identifies similar issues for the way older people are portrayed in the media. Such image and language feeds assumptions of old age as undesirable, useless and leads to a 'burden model' or perception that older people will mean a drain on resources. It is often implicit, perhaps inadvertent, but language such 'the elderly', or 'poor old souls' depersonalises and can convey negative assumptions of passivity and need as does that simple phrase in my earlier conversation 'ministry *to* them'. Some recent studies have sought to challenge such assumptions and emphasise the gifts, wisdom and skills older people have to contribute (Collyer, et al., 2008, p5) and one suggests different patterns of ministry can open channels through which to exercise them. "Some practices in churches could be intentionally improved or initiated to support and strengthen the dignity of older people and recognise their value and contribution. Ministry, including pastoral and social care, can be done with and through older people and not just to or for them" (Board of Education, 2012 p.30).

However, a paragraph concluding the section of a strategy document for deployment of authorised lay and ordained ministry in my Diocese, incongruously headed 'Ministry to the Elderly', illustrates a problem-focused attitude and that there is still work to do before older peoples' ministries are recognised with anything approaching equal value. "One of the challenges which all sectors of our society face is that the percentage of the

population that will be considered elderly is growing rapidly. The church will need to find ways to expand our ministry to this group and to initiative (sic) creative ways of nurturing and harnessing the spirituality and rich gifts this group has to offer for the life of the church and its mission" (Diocese of St Albans, 2012, para.3.8).

Another common assumption in churches is that old equals ill and likely to demand more pastoral care. It is a reality that older people will face some serious and multiple minor disabilities in later years (Stevenson, 1996), but it is important to distinguish ageing and age-related diseases to avoid ageist assumptions, or regarding old age simply as preparation for the next life (Scrutton, 1990). Such assumptions may lead to a view that older people no longer have anything to offer the future of the church and compound it by a 'myth of philanthropy' (Scrutton, 1990, pp.23-4), that older people treated with compassion means ageism is not an issue – a point well illustrated by the reported conversation with which I began. Once again, that simple phrase betrays something of power in the relationship which needs to be understood if ministry is to be empowering and not patronising. Old age can be experienced as a time of diminishment and of having to learn to receive help or accept becoming more dependent on others and being or feeling patronised is a common experience which can make it more difficult to come to terms with (Woodward, 2008, pp.190-1). Care that is given with an element of 'strength to weakness' mentality can undermine the value of work alongside older people and intentions to empower and resource them (Board of Education, 2012, p. 26)

Assumptions that older people have had their day and the future of the church lies in attracting younger people may lead to a marginalising or a disempowering culture in churches. Older people find themselves blamed for church decline (Ross, 2011), although the view is not uncontested (Jones, 2011). Woodward argues we should stop apologising for having elderly congregations and celebrate, not be ashamed of them (Woodward, 2006). Stereotypical ideas of older people as inflexible and unwilling to change or unwilling to engage in new styles of worship compound their sense of blame and fail to recognise the contribution they are making, something I noted in my first period of ministry: "I hate the dismissive attitude towards the (older) congregation as a problem and as the ones who do not want to move forward. It is such a negative view of older people and there is much they can teach us about worship and commitment" (Goatly, 2005).

The way churches are organised also may unintentionally discriminate and marginalise, for example in the timing of what are often called 'traditional' services in early morning, or after dark in the evening, both more difficult for older people (Woodward, 2008). In both my previous churches, the later morning service was advertised as our 'main' service and described as 'family friendly', implying these are not for older people or marginalising those services that are assumed to meet the needs of the older members, leaving them feeling at best tolerated or of no value to the whole church.

Stereotypical assumptions by definition treat all within a defined group the same and diminish the importance attached to other social stratification such as class or gender. Recognising the diversity that exists within the group labelled 'older people' is crucial (Victor, 1991). One report helpfully explored the changing heterogeneity of this older population with increasing numbers likely to come from minority ethnic groups, be female, people living alone due to death of spouse or divorce, and changes in economic preparation. Changes in provision for care in the community means fewer will be living in residential care and more independently or in supported accommodation. It rightly and significantly noted that issues of ageism need to be approached with caution as each experiences is unique, (Board of Social Responsibility 1990, p.15).

As an older ordained woman I am acutely aware of the multi-faceted nature of discrimination. The inter-connectedness of age and gender is well established (Ginn and Arber, 1995) although Thompson, argues there is still much to be explored to understand why this is so (Thompson, 2005). Both forms of discrimination operate at all levels. At a macro level they are related in issues of power and well-being, while at a micro level the links are more likely to be seen in issues of identity, values and networks (Ginn and Arber, 1995). The interplay between sexism and ageism is well illustrated by the view of one Christian counsellor who suggests traditional theology does not serve women well due to its patriarchal doctrine and assumptions concerning purpose, value and vocation. Women become "caught in an unjust situation aimed at preserving the status quo and dual pressures to a focus on future possibilities and an emphasis on doing" and older women are unable to "find value in themselves or perceive the value God places on them because they see their limitations in actively carrying out their vocations" (Neuger, 2001, p.226).

A further important qualification to stereotypical assumptions at this level is the breadth of the age span which can be from 55 to 105. This led one study to propose a

three-tier model of Pre-Senior - Working independent (55–64); Senior – Retired independent (65–80) and Older Frail - Dependent (80+) (Collyer, et al., 2008). When working with older people, therefore it is necessary to consider more defined age groups in the planning of services or activities and mission strategies: "It is likely that no one way of doing church or evangelism will fit all three cohorts. New approaches will be needed alongside existing ones, especially as we seek to connect with an increasing proportion of younger-old who have never had any meaningful contact with church in their lifetime." (Collyer, et al., 2008, p.5)

This latter issue also appeared in an American study, (Hanson, 2008) which highlighted the need to take seriously new emerging groups of older people, the 'new old', people aged 50 – 70. Among the characteristics of this group is a desire to keep working beyond retirement, remain active and involved and a reluctance to participate in things which might identify them with ageing. Churches need to be more imaginative and less stereotypical when engaging with 'new old' who have much to offer for service, spiritual growth, and intergenerational health and not only "as ushers, bulletin folders and coffee makers" (Hanson, 2008, p.125). Studies in the UK have recognised this same issue (Morisy, 2011; Board of Education, 2012). Morisy notes this changing demographic means that the 'new old' are treading new territory and understanding of what becoming older means. Judgements and expectations about ageing based on a model of three stages of life are suddenly out of date. It leaves the present generation of people entering 'older age' disorientated and needing to find new ways to use this gift of extra years (Morisy, 2011, p.77) and the church has barely begun to appreciate and harness this gift (Morisy, 2004; Board of Education, 2012).

Hanson (2008) highlights as myth assumptions that older people are already Christian and points to an increasing need to find new ways to evangelise so they hear the story. She sees value in intergenerational experiences, which have the potential to break the stereotypes each generation holds of the other alongside a creative way to share faith stories. The comprehensive and encouraging report of the Board of Education explores implications for the church and for older people in the UK and advocates lifelong learning as one way to meet the challenge to find ways of enabling those in a younger "rising elderly" generation who may be less familiar with the Christian story to integrate learning with personal experiences (Board of Education 2012, p26).

Various ideas have emerged recently in the UK to meet this need as 'Fresh Expressions' of church (Collyer, et al., 2008; Fresh Expressions, undated) including 'Holidays at

Home' (Collyer, 2006), Senior Alpha (Alpha, 2013), luncheon clubs, sometimes including services. I have had experience of some of these in each of the churches in which I have been minister and they, like the story group can be enriching experiences of shared learning and recreation. However, I am also mindful that an attempt I made to run an Alpha course linked with afternoon tea for a group of older people floundered when they discovered the material supplied was labelled 'Alpha for Seniors'. There was a reluctance accept the label 'senior' and assumption that a course designed for older people meant it was thought they were not capable of taking the 'proper' course.

Experience suggests that often it is older people themselves who take responsibility and enable these initiatives to take place, although many of do not consider themselves old, and may not presume to call it ministry. A very successful 'Holiday at Home' in my previous church is co-ordinated by a group of women all in their 70s, and the drivers who provide the transport are of similar age. Their energy and commitment is exemplary. However each year the effort seems greater and there is a reality to be addressed when ageing affects an individual's capacity to continue the ministries they have been exercising. The church has a responsibility to be sensitive and as Tomkinson observes, "(t)here is..a fine line between encouraging the gifts and learning, valuing acquired wisdom and experience, and exploiting the ministerial resources generously offered" (Tomkinson, 2012, p.102).

The Structural Level

At this level the focus is the social divisions and power relations associated with them, what Thompson described as what is 'sewn-in' to the fabric of society (Thompson, 1992). Early studies of ageism in the UK focused on structural issues relating to employment, such as the inequality resulting from retirement and de facto discriminatory age barriers to recruitment (Bytheway, 1995; Laczko, and Philippson , 1990). Whilst changing patterns of retirement may be justified by economic situations, age discrimination where people are judged by age and not by ability to do the job introduces unfair discrimination especially if it assumes older workers offer a lower level of value for money (Thompson, 2011, p.193).

Ageism finds expression here as economic discrimination and loss of status, which transforms positive gain of extended life into a burden (Phillipson and Thompson, 1996). The experience of losing work or movement away from employment may leave the individual with a sense of loss of competence as well as status, although as Morisy

points out this need not be the case, as it is the context in which competence is practised that changes with the additional bonus of time to do so (Morisy, 2011, p.86).

Prejudice and stereotypes are at work here, for example in the use of the 'Old Age Dependency Ratio' in government policy planning, tapping into assumptions that older people are automatically dependent and economically unproductive (Smethurst, 2012). It also reflects assumptions that older people are harder to train, or an ideology that it is good to make way for younger people. However as Macdonald (2004) observes, the changing UK demographic context which will see a rise in the proportion of workforce over 50 and decrease in the pool of younger workers, means some attitudes and policies will have to change if the necessary levels of skills and expertise are to be maintained. Midwinter makes the same point about personal loss and waste among those who choose to work in a voluntary capacity (Midwinter, 1990b).

As a 'de facto' employer of people, the Church of England has been challenged to ask how it takes account of issues of ageing, among which it was suggested fear of death coupled with a materialistic culture which emphasises productivity are primary influences (Board of Social Responsibility, 1990). Scrutton suggests the status of older people probably always has been linked to achievement and this leads to pressure to continue to perform (Scrutton, 1990, p.17) and Woodward that "(T)oo much of our identity is imprisoned in the status or importance or control that our work and our work role bring" (Woodward, 2008, p.205). Writing particularly about ordained ministry, Tomkinson argues an age-related cut-off point raises a theological and ecclesiological position of functionality, (Tomkinson, 2012, p102), which picks up threads of the distinction made by Tournier between sense of identity drawn from being rather than doing referred to earlier.

Within the church, structural ageism is probably most clearly illustrated by age barriers to certain forms of ministry. This varies between Dioceses, but a revised strategy for recruitment and retention of clergy in my Diocese, where the majority of clergy are over 45 and 18% over 60, seeks to create an even (lowered) age distribution across both stipendiary and non-stipendiary clergy posts and Lay Readers. It aims to do this by deliberately lowering the age at which people will be supported in exploring calling to authorised lay or ordained ministry. This they argue will "increase the number of years of service from investment in training; to strengthen the spectrum of role models presented in the ministry of the church and to deepen the pool of

experience and wisdom brought through long-serving clergy" (Diocese of St Albans, 2012).

Although it makes economic sense, the harsh reality for me was, had that barrier been in place when I reached the point of seeking support to go forward for training, I would have been excluded from any form of ordained ministry simply on the grounds of age. The fact that I had been exercising an ordained ministry for nearly three years when this new age barrier was introduced did not stop me feeling the value, even the legitimacy, of my ministry was being questioned. An objective observer would rightly respond that an arbitrary age limit is a quantitative, not qualitative measure, and other issues were also at play, but I saw significance in the way this experience mirrored those in ageism of vulnerability and feeling no longer worth the investment.

Ageism and Power

Issues of power have emerged throughout this analysis and it is clear ageism cannot be considered without an understanding of power and how it operates. In the early days of developing teaching for anti-discriminatory practice, discrimination was often defined as 'prejudice plus power'. It was particularly used in relation to anti-racist practice, but had wider application across all forms of discrimination. It now seems remarkably naïve and simplistic, not least because it assumes two distinct groups, the powerful and powerless and fails to address the complexity of power and how it operates. For this reason, later definitions tended to refer to 'relatively' powerful or powerless groups (Dalrymple and Burke, 2006; Thompson, 2012). Thompson adds that this power may derive through the circumstances or characteristics of the individual, cultural norms or social structures so is in all aspects and PCS levels of discrimination and in the 'glue' of ideology that binds them together (Thompson, 2012). The importance of language as one means by which ideas are communicated is reiterated, reflecting discriminatory culture and social structures and contributing to the continuance of such discrimination (Thompson, 2012, p.46).

Power as a theoretical concept is widely discussed and explored differently according to the context in which it is examined. Thompson's focus on ideology as a powerful force is just one aspect which he links with Foucault's analysis that power in society is a reflection of dominant knowledge and types of discourse used (Thompson, 2006; 2012). This is a large and complex area beyond the scope of this paper, but a key thread for this purpose is the focus Foucault brings to power not as what someone may or may

not possess but as a property of the dynamics of relationships and its fluidity in interaction between individuals, groups or within institutions, needs to be appreciated (Thompson, 2011)).

In discussing Foucault's view of power Dalrymple and Burke argue that it should be understood to have the capacity to be creative as well as repressive and can contribute to the development of sense of self. They also emphasise the importance of understanding the context of relationships and therefore consider the focus should not be on who has power so much as how it is exercised (Dalrymple and Burke, 2006). This raises significant issues in feminist critique for women seeking to exercise leadership in a context shaped by patriarchal practice (Jamieson, 1997). When issues of ageism are added, the contextual importance attached to contribution to the political economy, and access to resources must also be considered (Vincent, 1999).

Bytheway (1995) suggests the development of understanding of the link between ageism and power may well have suffered from stereotypical assumptions that underlie ageism of older people as vulnerable and powerless. Importantly, Vincent argues that ageism is a symptom rather than a cause of powerlessness (Vincent, 1999). It is further complicated by assumptions that those who are in power are, or should be, younger. Older people in positions of power and influence may reach a point of being considered 'too old' and be persuaded to relinquish it, but when and how such judgements are made, and by whom, is critical to the debate.

The challenges of power as an issue for the church have been examined in depth (Percy, 1998; Kearsley, 2008) and here there is much ambivalence. It can emerge as a concept in worship, the 'power of the Spirit moving', or in the delivery of a 'powerful message'. In that sense it is generally thought of as positive and something to be welcomed, but power as a dynamic in human relationships is less comfortably acknowledged. Yet the existence of both positive and negative influences in power relations is inescapable in a community that, despite aspiration for '*koinonia*', remains a sociological reality (Kearsley, 2008, p.93). This ambivalence is also in the Christian story: the power of the cross over death is both victory and an image of powerlessness and although we are commissioned to preach a gospel of power, powerlessness is 'close to the heart of the Christian kerygma' (Percy, 1998, p.41).

In his analysis of ministry, Pickard (2009) acknowledges power as a dynamic of human relationships and argues a collaborative approach in ministry will always require both sharing and bestowal of power. He highlights structures of our society and cultures as

well as norms and expectations of leadership as key challenges to this and suggests "(t)he prevailing cultural values have a far greater impact on our religious life and forms of ministry than most of us realise or care to know" (Pickard 2009, p.3), an argument that is consistent with the influences identified in Thompson's PCS analysis. This may be evident in both actual and vested hierarchy as despite the image of Church as the Body of Christ, in which power resides and is shared, popular thinking will still locate power in individuals and hierarchies (Jamieson 1997, p.12).

The notion of hierarchy is most readily located at the structural level of discrimination because of its relationship with power, but its impact will affect all levels and may be affected by a range of differences including race, gender, age and disability (Dalrymple and Burke 2006; Thompson, 2006). Jamieson's reflection on her experience as a Bishop gives particular insight into women's ambivalence towards power which is both externally constructed and internally reinforced by 'generations of social conditioning' (Jamieson, 1997, p.25). Westwood also observes women in the church have suffered from what she would call the 'power of culture as lived practices' (Westwood, 2002) which in churches often sees pastoral care, and perhaps most especially pastoral care of the elderly as 'women's work', something which certainly resonates with my first period of ministry.

In my experience the reality of power in the church is largely unrecognised in the day to day practice of ministry. Yet despite the fact that we are likely to be reminded at ordinations and installations we will always be a deacon, one who serves, whatever position we take up, a hierarchy of ministry persists. In lay ministry, I struggled with not being able to locate myself in a commonly understood hierarchy (Goatly, 2008) and was disempowered by that. When age brought me up against barriers affecting the type of ordained ministry I could exercise, I found myself disempowered again by hierarchy and was often referred to as being 'just NSM', something which has been identified in the experience of many non-stipendiary or self-supporting ministers with some evidence of this being a particular issue for women and older people who may have had significant secular careers (Shepherd, 2011; Morgan, 2011).

Conclusions

Having explored what ageism looks like in the church and how it is impinges on the ministries open to and exercised by older people, it is clear it is an issue that needs to be addressed. It is one factor that will affect whether older people are seen as agents

or merely recipients of ministry, but it also affects personal dignity, identity, sense of purpose and spiritual well-being.

Thompson's PCS analysis helps to identify a number of issues and processes by which this happens and shows it to operate at all levels. At the personal and structural levels, the individual experience drawn on so far may not reflect that of others, but there is some evidence that it is not unique. Themes and examples of ageism at the cultural level are more widely recognised and likely to have general application. None of it can be considered without reference to other forms of discrimination and power.

The challenge for the church is complex as it seeks to tread a path between striving to be a community in which every individual is empowered and meeting the needs of each without leaving some feeling they are a burden and others feeling their continuing capacity to contribute is denied or excluded. While there is some recognition that older people bring to the church a richness of gifts and experience which can enhance the life of the community, stereotypical assumptions and language too often feed into disempowering practice and experience. Consequently these rich resources and gifts are stifled by ageism and the church must seek ways of empowering those who bring and offer them if they are to be its effective minsters.

There is certainly need to develop models of good practice for the empowerment of ministries of older people, and it is one in which the voices of older people themselves must be heard.

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Appendix 3

Anglia Ruskin University

Professional Doctorate in Practical Theology

Paper 3

Exploring how the ministries of older people are empowered in the church

Student SID: 0162633

Submitted

January 2014

Contents

ABSTRACT

Ruth Goatly

Exploring how the ministries of older people are empowered in the church

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This paper sets out an agenda for research which explores ministries of older people in the church. It describes the context of a parish church in which a number of older people are activity engaged in a range of ministries and sets this within a wider context of a church and society concerned with the implications of an ageing population and influenced in its approaches by ageism.

The process of determining the research question is explored and some of the influences on this from previous practice and research experience are considered. The significance of concern for issues of justice and equality are highlighted, which leads to affirming the importance of a focus on empowerment of older people in their ministries.

The case is made for using Case Study methodology drawing on the ministries identified as related 'cases', and employing qualitative methods of inquiry by which to gather data, primarily through interview. Some of the challenges to this as someone who has been part of the context for a while are acknowledged throughout and a commitment to approach this with reflexivity and ethical integrity established.

Finally, the intention of the research to extend knowledge and understanding of the experience of older people in ministry is established and the relevance to practical theology and potential to inform practice in the church briefly considered.

The Research context

The context for this research is an Anglican parish church in a reasonably prosperous part of the country. I have been part of the church for just over eight months, in the role of Associate Vicar, having completed a curacy in a parish about 10 miles away. The church itself is a little over 70 years old, and began as a small worship group in a local house during wartime. It moved to its present building in 1955, and became an independent parish church in December 1972.

When the church began much of the surrounding area was rural agricultural land until fifteen years of post-war developments resulted in about 2,500 homes in what became its parish. This was added to in the 1970s and 80s by a new estate of about 1,500 homes on what had been farmland on the edge of the parish boundary. Some of this is council-owned property but most in private ownership. My home of just over 12 months is in that far corner of the parish, about a mile from the church.

There are some members of the church who are significant history holders, although so far as I have been able to establish, none now whose memories can recall anything of those very early days. The majority of the present congregation is over the age of 60 years and it is the source of sadness and anxiety for them that they see fewer active young families and there is a rueful sense of loss of the not so distant past when there was a large Sunday School and Youth activities.

Like other churches in the Diocese, it has a 'Mission Action Plan', agreed in 2012, although it is not at all clear that the process by which it was developed was negotiated with and owned by the church membership. The first observation under the heading of 'what we have seen about our parish' reads: "Our parish has many older people living on their own, high house prices mean younger families need two incomes to live here." In the second section of 'what we have seen about our church', it is noted that "Our volunteer base is getting older and we need more volunteers to help welcome, drive, visit the housebound" (Diocese of St Albans, 2012a)

My observation over the last eight months is that whilst both of these comments may be true the level of commitment and active engagement among the older members in the ministry and mission of the church is strong and influential. However, there is a growing, sense of concern among some that they are reaching the point at which they will be making transitions into being in less active ministries and their perceived

absence of successors causes them to feel burdened with responsibility for the continuing life of the church.

Nevertheless, there are some important and thriving ministries in which older people are involved, including:

- A weekly Luncheon Club, which over the last three years has been preceded by a traditional BCP Communion Service, attended by about half the Luncheon Club members. For most of these people this is their only church attendance. There are four teams of women, most over 60 who prepare the lunches, and a team of drivers including one over 80, who provide transport. The Luncheon Club operates in school term time only as a link with a local Secondary School provides teams of Year 7 pupils who come to serve and assist as part of their community engagement curriculum.
- A Saturday 'Coffee Shop', an initiative now led by a 79 year old, that regularly attracts 30-40 people, some of whom are not otherwise connected with the church, and provides a relaxed meeting place.
- House groups and Bible study groups, which make particular efforts to include elderly people living on their own, and in one case meets in the home of an elderly woman who otherwise would be unable to participate.

Plans are agreed for running a 'Holiday at Home' in 2014, modelled on an established pattern (Collyer, 2006; Collyer, Dalpra, Johnson, and James, 2008), for older people in the community who are isolated and less likely to be able to get away. The team being formed to lead this project are all over 60.

The present ministry team comprises the Vicar (49), myself (63) as Associate Vicar, a Lay Reader (61), retired Church Army Sister (79) and a retired Canon Priest (90), who continues to take an active role in preaching and has only recently ceased to exercise what he called a 'public ministry' of funerals in order to become full time carer for his wife. The Vicar, the youngest of us, has been in post for four years and throughout this time has been managing ill health. My arrival was greeted with openly expressed relief both by him and members of the congregation and I am acutely aware of being placed in a 'rescuer' role at times as a result. This level of gratitude may translate into sense of obligation and may need to be taken into account when seeking agreement to participate in the research and interpreting the responses that are given.

Personal context

I entered church ministry ten years ago, leaving a career in criminal justice education

and having achieved a national role in management and development of a professional qualification. I had worked in higher education for ten years and prior to that had a career as a probation officer. Throughout my careers I continued academic study and completed several postgraduate qualifications in Social Sciences, Criminology, Counselling and Policy Studies. In the course of these studies and during my career in higher education I undertook various research projects which required managing both qualitative and quantitative data and had gained experience in a range of methods of data gathering with human subjects, including vulnerable adults who had experienced domestic violence.

In some cases the purpose of research was to assist gatekeepers in strategic planning and that often carried expectations that it would provide quantitative data to enable them both to plan services and justify the use of resources. It usually would include some qualitative data gathered from questionnaires to service providers on what they considered to be the best ways of meeting the needs of service users. As their researcher however, I argued it was important to include the voices of service users. This required negotiating with resource and budget holders and raised issues of power and a heightened awareness of processes that can silence voices. I also had to recognise that I had limited power over the use of the research findings or whether those voices I included would be heard. However, I learned a great deal through these experiences about negotiating with gatekeepers and issues of ethics in the design, conduct and presentation of research, especially where it was necessary to preserve anonymity of participants, all of which will inform this present research.

In my teaching role, I had responsibility for the development of courses which focused on anti-discriminatory practice and reflective practice, both of which have contributed to my own learning and deepened my awareness of issues of injustice and oppression. It also made me realise how difficult it is to hear what someone else is saying when their life experiences, characteristics and situations are different to my own. Language plays an important part in this and how questions are framed and responses are heard can be affected by many factors, including misunderstanding or assumptions about the meaning attached to words.

For the first five years of ministry in the church I was in a lay ministry role as a pastoral minister. I commenced study in Theology not long after I entered this ministry and in time completed the MA in Pastoral Theology with a dissertation exploring the experience, using autoethnography as its method. This qualitative

method of research was new to me but I appreciated its dialogical approach in which story is affirmed and respected, and the space given to inner, silenced voice. It may not be an appropriate method for this research, but it raises the importance to me of flexibility and reflexivity in determining how to approach it.

Focus of this research

The focus of my research will be ministries of older people in the church. Whilst it must consider ministry with and among older people, since that forms a significant part of the context, it is the active role of older people in ministry that I am particularly concerned with. There was an epiphany moment for me part way through completing Paper 2 (Goatly, 2013), when I heard myself describe the focus of my study as 'ministries *exercised* by older people' (my emphasis). Until then I had been stuck with a focus on how issues of age and ageism in the church limited or denied ministries of older people. Whilst this is a key issue that will form a significant background to the research, it was a paradigm shift to focus on active ministry which takes place despite the challenges of age and ageism.

In the process of seeking to frame the research question, I have considered a number of key words and have moved between 'empowering' and 'evaluating' the ministries exercised by older people. My initial intention to focus on empowerment grew from wanting to understand the paradox of my own experience of what I described as empowering and enriching ministry with older people and my own experience of disempowerment in lay ministry (Goatly, 2010, 2013). On reflection, however, I may risk attaching particular meaning based in my own experience that may have different resonance for the older people to be included in this research. Using empowerment in the research question may introduce a potential for bias or assumption that would need to be addressed.

Although Robson (2011) suggests that most real world research, of which this must be an example, is essentially evaluation of some form, I also have resisted using the word evaluation in the research question. Some of this may stem from having worked on evaluation projects and reports in my academic career, where usually I was an external researcher whereas this research involves my own practice and the experience of people with whom I live and work. Perhaps even greater reluctance stems from associating evaluation with experience of more formal roles in quality

assurance and inspection using detailed and painstakingly worked out criteria, which carried responsibility and some authority to make judgements that would affect the future direction of qualifications and programmes of study.

However I take note of an interesting evaluation study which used emancipatory research in a drop in centre for youth (Whitmore, 2001). This highlighted the importance of recognising social, political, cultural and economic factors, and gender and disability values in the research context. It emphasised the need to make hidden values explicit and understanding and taking account of issues of power, including the power of the researcher. In this context the challenge was to give voice to young people on the margins, and learning to listen to, or with, different forms of communication and language. Other emancipatory research, especially that associated with disability highlight reciprocal relationships in which both researcher and researched gain and empowerment to action occurs (Oliver, 1997). Empowerment to action is not the primary aim of my research, although there may be some elements of it in that aspect which focuses on the Holiday at Home project, but the need to consider the link between the research and issues of social inequality and justice, and issues of power in the relationship between researcher and researched are valuable insights to hold in mind as "(r)eflexivity and recognition of the subtle and hidden dynamics of the interviewer's relationship with the interviewee are crucial" (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.65).

Why is this important?
Hardly a day goes by without some reference to age and ageing on our news and radio broadcasts. We are living at a time when issues arising from concerns of population ageing are high on the social and political agenda. Much of this has to do with economic issues, such as the escalating cost of care as an increasing proportion of older people in the population places demands on already stretched resources for social and health care (Jowit, 2013; House of Lords, 2013).

This creates something of a crisis-ridden context in which churches also have adopted a language of the 'problem' of ageing congregations (Jones, 2011) and older congregations are seen as symptomatic of a dying church (Ross, 2011; Church Times, 2013) or existing only for the old (Wilson, 2103). It is important not to minimise or ignore the reality that an ageing population and congregation are likely to place increased demands on pastoral care resources both within church and its capacity for

mission in its communities. However, it can also be an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the spiritual as well as practical needs of older people and develop creative ministry among them. Crucially it offers opportunity to recognise the resources older people bring to the church as contributors to the spiritual nurturing of the whole community and using resources of older people for ministry (Board of Education, 2012).

The growing interest in ministry among older people in recent years takes a number of forms. Some have focused on problems and experiences of ageing and in particular dementia and have examined the spiritual needs and care of those affected by it (MacKinlay, 2006; Morse and Hitchings, 2008; Swinton, 2012). Others look more generally at the pastoral needs of older congregations and ministry among older people (Knox, 2002, Woodward, 2008, Hawley and Jewell, 2009). Some who concentrate on issues to do with spirituality and ageing look at faith development in older age, with innovative approaches to mission and learning together (Collyer, et al. 2008; Board of Education, 2012). Even so, such research as has been conducted tends to focus more on meeting needs and much less on exploring active ministries of older people, what affects its practice or how they evaluate their contribution to ministry and mission in this challenging contemporary context.

My own observation of older people's experiences while a pastoral minister taught me a great deal about experiences of ageism and it was uncomfortable, if not surprising, to see it being played out in the church. Experiences of being, or feeling marginalised in the church might stem from feeling regarded as a problem, or no longer having value in a community that emphasises a need to focus on its younger people for the future. This seems especially true for those who once played significant roles and, when they are no longer contributors in that way, it is easy for them to feel a burden. Such issues have been recognised for some time as characteristics of experience of ageism in wider society (Bytheway, 1995; Thompson, 2005).

My experience in lay ministry was predominantly among older people. It was not the ministry I expected to have and initially did not welcome it. However I discovered it to be energising, enriching and empowering and in many ways considered myself to be both a recipient of and contributor to ministry. I can point to examples of ministries of older people in all four church contexts in which I have ministered that I would consider to be empowering both of them and of the ministry of the church as a

corporate body. They may not label what they do as ministry and many would come from a culture of regarding ministry as synonymous with ordination, but I would argue it is ministry nonetheless. I remain exercised by the incongruity between the rhetoric of the recognition and gratitude for the skills and gifts that older people bring to our churches and the response which defines them as a group that challenges the ingenuity of the church to find new ways of ministering to them.

At its heart, I consider this is a matter of justice and equality and find a further dissonance between the rhetoric of equality in our churches about its ministries and the reality of discrimination that operates to exclude some altogether, or through subtleties of power and hierarchy afford difference in perceived value. Ultimately therefore as I progress this research, it must engage with a theology of justice, empowerment and liberation, but it will also have to examine theologies of ministry further, particularly how it is exercised and who by. It will have to delve deeper than I have so far gone into power and powerlessness, within our churches and wider society, and reflect on what our theologies have to say about that.

The resources I have to draw on to do this come not only from developing theological understanding of practice and considering reflexively the reality of practice, it can also draw on an understanding which is derived from practice in the world before I thought of it in theological terms, or before entry into a church role labelled it ministry. Much of what contributed to my knowledge and understanding in social care and criminal justice is just as relevant, especially those aspects that demanded attention to power, relationships of power and processes of discrimination and disempowerment and oppression. I can add into this experience of research into partnerships albeit in a specialist area of what happens to the voices of victims and survivors when partnerships are directed by those in places of power or organisational strength through access to resources or vested political interests.

Developing the research question

There are a number of assumptions and values that underpin this research that have shaped and informed the development of the research question in addition to those noted above from previous research and work experience. First, I attach importance and value to having a sense of belonging. One of the joys of the intergenerational story-sharing project with older people in my first period of church ministry (Goatly, 2008, 2013), was how it enhanced their sense of belonging as members of the church

community and recognition of their belonging with others in it. Secondly an ecclesiology that emphasises the importance of relationships and interconnectedness as part of the whole, each contributing to life of whole; and finally, a commitment to inclusion which seeks to confront injustice and exclusive practice, and latterly especially where it affects older people.

The focus and rationale for the proposed research has evolved from a more general interest in what might constitute good practice in collaborative ministry, which at the time had not identified age as a specific issue. This had followed from the Masters research using autoethnography (Goatly, 2010), which explored experience in a Parish initiative that was intended to be an expression of collaborative ministry. It raised a number of questions about theology of ministry and highlighted a number of unresolved issues of power and gender in collaborative practice.

I therefore set out to explore what might be good practice and what might challenge effective collaborative ministry (Goatly, 2012). I was by then in a position to reflect on both lay and ordained ministries in three quite different parish contexts. Two issues emerged quite quickly. One, the need to unpack and extend my understanding of ministry, was only to be expected. I recognised that I began with some assumptions about ministry shaped by early life experience in the Baptist tradition, where most family members held key lay positions in the running of the church. Looking back I would regard this as ministry although they would have spoken of it as the responsibility of being part of a priesthood of believers. Even so, at the time, I naively associated the language of ministry with ordination. It reminds me again as I move on in this research I need to be alert to the language and meaning attached to it by those whose ministries I wish to explore.

The second issue proved a hindrance to progress and brought me in touch with a measure of unexpected anger. It highlighted how issues of age had echoed at each point of my engagement with ministry from exploration of calling and through the paths that had been opened to me. Latterly this has been compounded by a focus on age of clergy in my Diocese that has labelled it a problem for its strategic plan for the deployment of staff into the future (Diocese of St Albans, 2012b). Whilst this is a genuine and understandable issue of concern, the impact of its discriminatory nature has affected me directly in the ministries open to me.

As a result, although I found ministry with older people mutually enriching and empowering, I identified a paradoxical experience as an older person going into

ministry that at times has been both discouraging and disempowering. This led to a shift of focus onto experiences of older people in the church and ministry and the limited attention given to older people's ministries or the voices of older people in understanding and evaluation of their experience in both receiving ministry and exercising it in the church.

Having opened up a need to consider the impact ageing and ageism has on the experience of older people in our churches and ministry, I took on the task of exploring some of the theory that underpins ageism as a processes of discrimination and how that impacts on the church (Goatly 2012). Ageism was found to be one factor that will affect whether older people are seen as agents or merely recipients of ministry, but it also affects personal dignity, identity, sense of purpose and spiritual well-being. By using a sociological model developed in the 1990s (Thompson, 1992; 2006; 2011) it was possible to explore some of processes by which this happens at all levels. Once again, issues of power generally and power in relationships emerged as crucial to understanding and application.

Thus the focus has shifted and changed. Now, although issues concerning good practice in collaborative ministry remain relevant, the focus has become a specific aspect of the contribution of ministries exercised by older people. My provisional hypothesis and conceptual framework is that older people are exercising ministries in the church that are vital to its life and mission, but these are constrained, unrecognised or unacknowledged because of the impact of ageism. A concern for empowerment flows from this and therefore despite the risks of assumption identified above, I have chosen to retain empowerment in the research question to ask how older people can be empowered in their exercise of ministries within the church.

Methodology

Given the importance of experience in practical theology and the role of listening in that, the choice of methodology must be inductive and begin with experience. A key influence in determining methodology and the methods appropriate to that was the evidence from experience and from initial research and literature that the voices of older people are generally absent or silent, despite the significant role they play in our churches and ministry. Methods that in some way give voice to older people are crucial.

The aim of the research is not to address causal issues, nor necessarily to bring about change in policy, but it must inform practice. Therefore it must work to extend knowledge and understanding of the role older people play in the life and ministry of the church. In reflecting real life experience it also must have the capacity to be realistic about some of the dilemmas older people face, for example the challenges of making transitions between different types of ministry and what becoming older means for them and the ministries they exercise.

Using the case study approach

Having considered a range of approaches, I have decided case study methodology and methods are most appropriate for this task. "(C)ase study method is ideal when a 'how or why' question is being asked about a contemporary issue over which the researcher has no control" (Gray, 2004, p.124). Case study has a history in social sciences in a wide range of professional contexts and areas of study (Cresswell, 2007) with which I feel some affinity. Once again however I am mindful of previous experience. I have used case studies in teaching and have marked and assessed too many in social work and other professional training which are little more than descriptions of events, individuals or groups with varying success in achieving a diagnostic aim of understanding and developing appropriate responses or intervention. Such case studies are tools for learning rather than research methodology as they do not have the same systematic approach to gathering and analysing information as that developed for research purposes and I must both learn from that and put aside any prejudice about their rigour as research.

Stake (2005) argues that the purpose of case study will be either intrinsic or instrumental, the latter having a concern for 'how' or how well something works. In this case, the aim of the research is not to evaluate how well the projects or ministries are doing, although there may be an element of that in what emerges. In acknowledging its intrinsic aim, I do not claim that it represents others or illustrates a generizable problem but use it because "in all its particularity or ordinariness, the case itself is of interest" (Stake 2005, p445). Thomas (2011) suggests the most common aim for case study is ''explanation' or a 'drilling down' to find explanation for a paradoxical finding or situation, while Simons (2009), whose particular interest is in education, suggests one of the strengths of case study as a research method is its capacity to "document multiple perspectives, explore contested viewpoints, demonstrate the influence of key actors and interaction between them in telling a

story of the programme or policy in action" (Simons, 2009, p.23). These arguments neatly reflect something of what brought me to this research focus .

The value and legitimacy of case study in research has been debated and promoted in recent years by authors such as Yin (1981, 1994, 2009), Stake (1995, 2005), Simons (2009). Yin describes it as an "empirical inquiry that – investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" Yin 2009, p. 18). The importance attached to triangulation, using multiple sources of evidence (Stake 1995; Yin 2009) has lent weight to its legitimacy as a research method and not a 'soft option' or 'quasi-experimental' as some have historically argued (Yin, 2009).

Several authors have described the general 'map' of case study research (Gray, 2004; Marshall and Rossman 2010; Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2009), but Robson suggests the details of case study research design are more likely to emerge in the process of data collection and analysis (Robson 2002). Nevertheless a typical case study will involve the selection of either a single case or a group of related cases, and study of those cases in their context and the collection of relevant data using a variety of sources such as interview, observation, and documentary records or other sources. (Robson, 2002, Yin 2009)

Case study respects the real-life context in which the research will take place by taking the reader "into the setting with a vividness and detail not typically present in more analytic reporting formats" (Marshall and Rossman, 2010, p267). In this way it allows retention of "holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events such as individual life cycles, small group behaviour, organisation and managerial processes" (Yin 2009 p4). Therefore it has the potential to meet some of the key features I want to include of flexibility and capacity to listen to the voices and experiences of people who are in many ways marginalised in the context in which I am working, but who nevertheless play a vital role in its life and engagement with the world.

Despite these positive reasons for using case study, there are some criticisms of it as a research method, especially where it uses qualitative methods that should not be overlooked. These focus in particular on issues of generalizability, objectivity and reliability. Yin talks of these challenges as 'traditional prejudices' (Yin, 2009) and Simons as 'potential weaknesses' that need not be limitations but rather "questions about how they are perceived and interpreted" (Simons 2009, p. 24).

Those who support the use of case study as a valid means of research recognise the specificity of the case, its contexts and characteristics mean that generalizability is always likely to be an issue (Gomm, Hamersley and Foster, 2000). Others suggest that rather than focus on generalizability, it is better to consider the extent to which findings can be considered to be transferable (Simons, 2009; Flyvjerg, 2013), or of benefit to others seeking to gain deeper understanding of an issue or concern (Stake 2000). I make no claim that this research will produce generizable findings for policy-making but rather what Simons suggests is a valid aim, to "present a rich portrayal of a single setting to inform practice, establish the value of the case and / or to add to knowledge of a specific topic" (Simons 2009, p. 124).

The issue of objectivity stems from the more transparent direct involvement of the researcher in the process of data gathering. Since research in practical theology demands attention to experience and context it cannot escape this challenge. I have noted earlier sensitivity to the context in which I am working and will be researching, which places me in a privileged role as 'rescuer' and expert. I also must acknowledge my own experience both as an older person in ministry and as someone who wants to see collaboration in ministry work and for older peoples' contributions in it recognised and valued.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to the use of case study is questions of rigour (Yin, 2009). To counter this it will be important to follow systematic procedures, and guard against allowing equivocal evidence or biased views affecting the direction and conclusion of the research. (Yin , 2009, p. 14). Yin further argues that attention to three principles of data collection: drawing on multiple sources of evidence, ensuring a sound, reliable case study database and a establishing a transparent chain of evidence will substantially increase the quality of the research (Yin 2009, pp.114-17)

Data gathering methods:
There is a core group of people who are involved in ministry in this parish church in the various initiatives described above and in the ministry team, who are themselves over the age that commonly defines them as 'older people'. These will be the target research group and the ministry activities will form a group of related cases for the purposes of using the case study approach. Most of the people involved have shown themselves more than willing to talk about their experiences in casual conversation, but they have yet to be invited to participate in formal research. Nevertheless, it might be anticipated that the number of people who will engage with this could exceed

thirty, in which case methods that can accommodate groups as well as individuals may need to be used and it may be necessary to consider some sampling.

It will be necessary to make some choices from a range of methods that are commonly used in case study research. One possible method would be surveys using questionnaires to all those in the church who are over 60, but I am not convinced these would give sufficient scope for the voice of the older people who will be involved and at this stage do not propose to use them. Rather, I intend to use interviews as the primary data gathering method. Given the early indication that a significant number of people may wish to contribute I have to consider sampling, but I am keen not to exclude anyone who wishes to talk about their ministries. In the first instance purposive sampling (Simons, 2009 p.34) will identify those who have had and currently have leadership roles in each of the key projects and activities identified above and the ministry team. To make this more manageable still, group interviews will be used both for those involved in the Luncheon Club and the Holiday at Home project. Several are involved in more than one project, so may appear in more than one case.

Unstructured interviews fit best with an interpretive approach (Thomas, 2011), but some structure will be important. I will therefore use a semi-structured approach with an 'agenda' of issues in an interview schedule and include some prompt questions to use if needed to invite them to explore what has encouraged and discouraged them in the activity, what their aims were and why they have continued with them. This may give some clues as to if and how they see their activities contributing to the life, ministry and mission of the church.

As with all question design, it will be important to frame any questions so far as possible to avoid bias in the way they are asked and, given the relationship I have already with the respondents, to guard against 'response bias', or giving what they think I might want to hear. I will need to ensure clarity about when an interview is taking place and not a 'routine' conversation or chat, mindful of issues of power that they may vest in me by virtue of perceived expertise as researcher (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.65).

Finally, to avoid the challenge of inaccuracy of recall or the distraction of note taking, I propose to tape record interviews and transcribe them. Although it is a time-

consuming process, I have substantial experience to draw on with both individual interviews and group discussion.

Some triangulation can be achieved by using document searches. There will be some documentary evidence of the background to the ministries I will look at, although given the length of time some have been operating, it is not certain that there are detailed documents outlining proposals for the Coffee Shop, or Luncheon Club to draw on, but there may be some references in PCC minutes which should be accessible. The proposal for the Holiday at Home was put before the PCC in September 2013 and this is both accessible and contains more detail.

A further source of evidence will come from observation and there will be ample opportunity to observe in each case. One of the challenges to this will be to stay open and not simply confirm by observation what I already assume I know from presence among them or previous experience, and to 'see differently' (Simons, 2009, pp.57-8).

An electronic case study database will be created for systematic storage of information collected. Although this will be demanding both in terms of time and managing what could be a large volume of information, I have some experience of this and having an accessible database that can be reviewed increases the reliability of the case study (Gray, 2004). To preserve confidentiality a code of initials will be used and no names or personal details will be recorded on this database.

Once data has been gathered the capacity to listen effectively to the voices and to interpret the data will be a significant challenge. Genuine listening in research is something that is complex and difficult. I have already acknowledged the significance of language here and my assumption about ministry. This may not be the language research participants choose to use of themselves and I have to be prepared to find their experiences and motives may concur or conflict with my own. This touches on an epistemological assumption underlying my approach which does not claim to be seeking an objective truth, such as a scientific inquiry might claim. In working within this kind of constructivist-interpretive paradigm of qualitative research, which "presumes that 'reality' is open to a variety of different interpretations and can never be accessed in a pure, uninterpreted form" (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.35), my own understanding will develop and may even change. This approach also recognises that I cannot be a detached observer, but too am a participant in the research process along with those whose ministries are its focus.

Ethical considerations

One of the ethical challenges will be to manage the tension between respect for the anonymity of participants when the study is shaped and informed by a desire to give voice to people whose voices are often not heard in church or in the research. One solution might be to separate any quotations from identities but that would compound the masking of voices that I want to be heard. However, participants could be given the choice of choosing a name under which they would consent to being quoted.

There are some implications arising from the fact that the research will involve adults who may be considered to be vulnerable people simply because of age. However, no-one who is identified as vulnerable because of illness such as dementia for example will be involved and none of the participants are housebound. Nevertheless, independent support will be arranged and will be available to anyone who might wish to talk about their experience of being involved in the research or any issues it raises for them and it will be made clear this confidential.

I need to be careful not to raise false expectations about the outcome of the research and also that no-one need feel compelled to be part of it. Written information and permissions will be sought from all participants and it will be made clear that consent to contributions being used can be withdrawn at any point without prejudice. There is a view that once consent is signed, control ebbs away from participants, since they are dependent on the interviewer to accurately represent their words and experience (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.65) and I take this as a serious and valid point. All transcripts of interviews will be transcribed and copies will be offered to the interviewees for their approval.

Relevance to practice and practical theology

By taking experience seriously, exploring and reflecting on it, this research is the essence of practical theology (Swinton and Mowat 2006). Through listening to the experiences of older people and the ministries they are exercising, I expect it to deepen and cast new insights into understanding the practice of ministry and mission of the church, and the role of older people can and do play in that. Theology will have something to say at each point of the process by which that emerges.

Part of the process also will be to seek to elicit theories for practice, an aim which is implicit in interpretive inquiry as "we have to study the meanings that people are constructing in the situations they find themselves, and process from these meanings

in order to understand the social world" (Thomas, 2011, p.171). This can be strengthened if a 'linear-analytic' model is used to present and report findings (Gray2004, p. 146). At the same time Thomas highlights the value of using theory as a tool, as the 'glue' or sinews and tendons 'holding one part to another, yet allowing them to articulate with each other" (Yin, 2009; Thomas, 2011, p. 179). Theories and understanding can be built by looking for connections and asking how it all fits together, in a process that is not just about what comes through the research but also through relating it to the bigger picture of experience and practice in the wider world.

The overall aim is to explore what it is that empowers and enables ministries of older people in the church, in a context which so far has revealed itself to be challenging and influenced by ageism and the realities of ageing. The wider context of a church that is concerned with the challenges of an ageing population and ageing congregations makes this both relevant and contemporary and the outcomes of potential benefit in both local churches and in the wider church.

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Appendix 4

Research Protocols

RESEARCH ETHICS APPLICATION FORM (STAGE 1)

More information on ethics procedures and any documents detailed in bold can be found at: www.anglia.ac.uk/researchethics. **You must read the** Question Specific Advice for Stage 1 Research Ethics Approval **form.**

All research carried out by students and staff at Anglia Ruskin University, and in general all students at our Associate Colleges, must comply with **Anglia Ruskin University Policy and Code of Practice for the Conduct of Research**.

There is no distinction between undergraduate, taught masters, research degree students and staff research.

All research projects, including pilot studies, must receive research ethical approval prior to approaching participants and/or commencing data collection. Completion of this Stage 1 Research Ethics Application Form is mandatory for all research applications*. It should be completed by the Principal Investigator in consultation with any co-researchers on the project, or the student in consultation with his/her research project supervisor.

For research only involving animals please complete the Animal Ethics Review Checklist *instead of this form.*

All researchers should:
- Ensure they comply with any laws and associated Codes of Practice that may be applicable to their area of research.
- Ensure their study meets with relevant Professional Codes of Conduct.
- Complete the relevant compulsory research ethics training.
- Refer to the Question Specific Advice for the Stage 1 Research Ethics Approval.
- Consult the Guidelines for Applying for Research Ethics Approval at Anglia Ruskin University.

If you are still uncertain about the answer to any question please speak to your Dissertation Supervisor/Supervisor, Faculty Research Ethics Panel (FREP) Chair or the Departmental Research Ethics Panel (DREP) Chair.

Researchers are advised that projects carrying higher levels of ethical risk will:
- *require the researchers to provide more justification for their research, and more detail of the intended methods to be employed;*
- *be subject to greater levels of scrutiny;*
- *require a longer period to review.*

Researchers are strongly advised to consider this in the planning phase of their research projects.

Section 1: RESEARCHER AND PROJECT DETAILS

Researcher details:	
Name(s):	**Ruth Goatly**
Department:	**Cambridge Theological Federation**
Faculty:	**Arts, Law and Social Sciences**
Anglia Ruskin email address:	**xxxxxx**

Status:							
Undergraduate		Taught Postgraduate		Postgraduate Research	✓	Staff	

If this is a student project:	
SID:	**xxxxx**
Course title:	**Professional Doctorate in Practical Theology**
Supervisor/tutor name	**xxxxx**

Project details:	
Project title (*not* module title):	Exploring the Ministries of Older People in the Church
Data collection start date: (note **must** be prospective)	April 2014
Expected project completion date:	**August 2015**
Is the project externally funded?	**No**
Licence number (if applicable):	

CONFIRMATION STATEMENTS – please tick the box to confirm you understand these requirements	
The project has a direct benefit to society and/or improves knowledge and understanding.	✓
All researchers involved have completed relevant training in research ethics, and consulted the Guidelines for Applying for Ethical Approval at Anglia Ruskin University.	✓
The risks participants, colleagues or the researchers may be exposed to have been considered and appropriate steps to reduce any risks identified taken (risk assessment(s) must be completed if applicable, available at: http://rm.anglia.ac.uk/extlogin.asp) or the equivalent for Associate Colleges.	✓
My research will comply with the Data Protection Act (1998) and/or data protection laws of the country I am carrying the research out in, as applicable. For further advice please refer to the Question Specific Advice for the Stage 1 Research Ethics Approval.	✓

Project summary (maximum 500 words):
Please outline rationale for the research, the project aim, the research questions, research procedure and details of the participant population and how they will be recruited.

This research comes out of reflection on and experience in ministry and explores contemporary issues facing our churches with ageing congregations and a wider social and political context of ageing populations. At a time when there is stress on engaging younger people for the future of the church, older people can feel marginalised even though they perform key roles in the life and ministry of the church. Recent research has tended to focus on the pastoral and spiritual needs of older people and to developing understanding and creative ways of ministering to and among them. Whilst there is some recognition that older people are also a resource in the churches little has been written about the ministries exercised by them and their voices are largely silent, so little is understood about how they experience the exercise of ministry. There is some evidence that the processes of ageism directly affect older people in the church in much the same way is in wider society, and specifically it also operates to constrain the ministries open to them.

This research will draw on the experiences of older people in one Anglican parish church, where I am an Associate Priest. There are several activities including a Luncheon Club, Coffee Shop, home groups and a proposed 'Holiday at Home'

project, which directly involve older people in ministry. The aim is to research these ministries and given this context, will ask the question: how are older people empowered in their ministries in the church.

It will use case study methodology and use interview as the primary method of data gathering. Semi-structured interviews will explore how they perceive their ministry, what brought them into it, what sustains them in it and what challenges they identify to their exercise of ministry. Some triangulation will be achieved through access to documentary data and some observation.

Participants will all be people over 60 years, who are involved in these ministry activities. None of them are affected by illness such as dementia that could potentially compromise capacity to understand and consent to being involved in the research and none of them are vulnerable through being housebound.

The arbitrary age of 60 is used because this is the defining age generally recognised and used in the literature and in national statistics. However, changes in demographics with people living longer, means a 'new old' age group is emerging of those between 60 and 70, whose experiences and expectations in ministry may differ from those aged 75+. The research will embrace the wider age-range and will be open to identify and explore this as an issue.

Given the number of people likely to participate, there will be some initial purposive sampling of those who have a direct role in the ministry activities identified. Group interviews will be used for two activities (Luncheon Club and Holiday and Home) and individual interviews for others and those in the ministry team.

Outline agreement and support for the research has been given by the Parochial Church Council and participants will be recruited following written invitation to individuals and groups involved in the identified ministry activities.

Section 2: RESEARCH ETHICS CHECKLIST - please answer YES or NO to ALL of the questions below.

	WILL YOUR RESEARCH STUDY?	YES	NO
1	Involve any external organisation for which separate research ethics clearance is required (e.g. NHS, Social Services, Ministry of Justice)?		✓
2	Involve individuals aged 16 years of age and over who lack capacity to consent and will therefore fall under the Mental Capacity Act (2005)?		✓
3	Collect, use or store any human tissue/DNA including but not limited to serum, plasma, organs, saliva, urine, hairs and nails? Contact matt.bristow@anglia.ac.uk		✓
4	Involve medical research with humans, including clinical trials?		✓
5	Administer drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to human participants?		✓
6	Cause (or could cause) pain, physical or psychological harm or negative consequences to human participants?		✓
7	Involve the researchers and/or participants in the potential disclosure of any information relating to illegal activities; or observation/handling/storage of material which may be illegal?		✓
8	With respect to human participants or stakeholders, involve any deliberate deception, covert data collection or data collection without informed consent?		✓
9	Involve interventions with children under 18 years of age?		✓
10	Relate to military sites, personnel, equipment, or the defence industry?		✓
11	Risk damage or disturbance to culturally, spiritually or historically significant artefacts or places, or human remains?		✓
12	Involve genetic modification, or use of genetically modified organisms?		✓

13	Contain elements you (or members of your team) are not trained to conduct?		✓
14	Potentially reveal incidental findings related to human participant health status?		✓
15	Present a risk of compromising the anonymity or confidentiality of personal, sensitive or confidential information provided by human participants and/or organisations?		✓
16	Involve colleagues, students, employees, business contacts or other individuals whose response may be influenced by your power or relationship with them?	✓	
17	Require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the human participants (e.g. pupils/students, self-help groups, nursing home residents, business, charity, museum, government department, international agency)?		✓
18	Offer financial or other incentives to human participants?		✓
19	Take place outside of the country in which your campus is located, in full or in part?		✓
20	Cause a negative impact on the environment (over and above that of normal daily activity)?		✓
21	Involve direct and/or indirect contact with human participants?	✓	
22	Raise any other ethical concerns not covered in this checklist?		✓

Section 3: APPROVAL PROCESS

Prior to application:
1. Researcher / student / project tutor completes ethics training .
2. Lead researcher / student completes Stage 1 Research Ethics Application form in consultation with co-researchers / project tutor.

NO answered to all questions (Risk category 1)

Research can proceed.
Send this completed form to your relevant FREP or DREP for their records.

i)   Complete Section 4 of this form.
ii) ii) Produce Participant Information Sheet (PIS) and Participant Consent Form (PCF) if applicable.

iii) Submit this form and PIS/ PCF where applicable to your Faculty DREP (where available) or Faculty FREP.

Two members of the DREP/FREP will review the application and report to the panel, who will consider whether the ethical risks have been managed appropriately.

- Yes : DREP / FREP inform research team of approval and forward forms to FREP for recording.
- No: DREP / FREP provides feedback to researcher outlining revisions required.

The panel may recommend that the project is upgraded to Category 3 - please see below for procedure.

(STAGE 1 APPROVAL)
NO answered to question 1-13
YES answered to any question 14-22 (Risk Category 2)

Yes answered to question 1 and / or 2 (Risk Category 3A)

Submit this completed form to your FREP to inform them of your intention to apply to an external review panel for your project.
For NHS (NRES) applications, the FREP Chair would normally act as sponsor / co-sponsor for your application.
The outcome notification from the external review panel should be forwarded to FREP for recording.

(STAGE 2 APPROVAL)
Yes answered to any question 3-13

Complete this form and the Stage 2 Research Ethics Application form and submit to your FREP. FREP will review the application and approve the application when they are satisfied that all ethical issues have been dealt with appropriately.

Section 4: ETHICAL RISK (Risk category 2 projects only)

Management of Ethical Risk (Q14-22)
For each question 14-22 ticked 'yes', please outline how you will manage the ethical risk posed by your study.

The project involves older people (over 60 years). In some circumstances people may be considered to be vulnerable due to age. However, no-one will be recruited as a participant who is affected by illness such as dementia for example, where their capacity to consent might be compromised, and none of the participants are housebound.

All will be provided with information concerning the research and an invitation to participate. It will be stressed that there is no obligation to participate and made clear they can withdraw from the research at any time, without prejudice.

There are no colleague or employer / employee relationships that might affect responses and the role I have does not carry any power to advantage or disadvantage any participant (checklist question 16). However the circumstances under which I came to the Parish Church and am currently serving, has placed me in a position of being regarded by some as a 'rescuer' and I will need to be alert to the potential for an element of gratitude to influence agreement to participate. Information to potential participants will emphasise that no-one need feel obliged to participate and no reasons need be given if any choose to opt out. There is nothing to suggest that the relationship will influence responses in interview either positively or negatively, but this will be something to be alert to in listening to responses and interpreting the data.

The Context is not one that requires access via a gatekeeper, nor formal permission to undertake the research (checklist item 17). However, as a matter of courtesy, an outline of the proposed research has been taken to the Parochial Church Council (PCC) in November 2013 and full support was given and minuted.

Group and individual Interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed and copies of the transcriptions given to participants to confirm they are happy with the contribution they have made. Information concerning the use of quotes from the interviews will be provided and participants will be given the option of adopting a pseudonym.

An electronic database of data will be compiled, and these will be coded with initials so that no names or personal details are contained in it.

There no identified risk of physical harm, however, independent support will be arranged and will be available to anyone who might wish to talk about their experience of being involved in the research or any personal issues it raises for them and it will be made clear this confidential.

Section 5: Declaration

*Student/Staff Declaration
By sending this form from My Anglia e-mail account I confirm that I will undertake this project as detailed above. I understand that I must abide by the terms of this approval and that I may not substantially amend the project without further approval.
**Supervisor Declaration
By sending this form from My Anglia e-mail account I confirm that I will undertake to supervise this project as detailed above.

*Students to forward completed form to their Dissertation Supervisor/Supervisor.

** Dissertation Supervisor/Supervisor to forward the completed form to the relevant ethics committee.

29 November, 2013   Version: 4.0

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
Research Project to Explore the Ministries of Older People in the Church

This research project is part of studies for a Professional Doctorate in Practical Theology, with the Cambridge Theological Federation and Anglia Ruskin University. Its purpose is to explore and find out more about the ministries that are exercised by older people in the church and especially what helps them and sustains them in those ministries. We live at a time when there is much in our news about the needs of ageing populations and the church as a whole is also concerned to understand more about what this means for its life and ministry. Recently there has been a growing amount of study into the support of older people in the church, how to best meet their pastoral and spiritual needs and this is very valuable. However, there has been much less written about the ministries that older people themselves are exercising in our churches. This research is going to look at that in particular, using the ministry of this church and some of the activities we are involved in, including:

- the Luncheon Club,
- Coffee Shop,
- home groups (including 'Game Birds')
- the proposed Holiday at Home that will be taking place in August .

You are invited to be part of this research, which will involve some interviews to share your thoughts and experiences of ministry here.
The research is being organised by Ruth Goatly and will be written up as part of the thesis for the Professional Doctorate.
If you want any further information about the research or what is involved in it, please do not hesitate to speak to me, either directly in person, or by phone (contact details above).

Your Participation in the Research Project
You have been invited to take part in this research because you are involved in one or more of the activities have been listed above. You do not have to take part and do not have to explain anything if you decide not to. If you do agree to take part, you can withdraw from the project at any time and that includes withdrawing any information that you may have given while the research is running.

If you agree to take part, you will be invited to take part in an interview. For those who are involved in the Luncheon Club and the Holiday at Home project, these will be group interviews, otherwise it will be an individual interview. If you are involved in more than one of the projects, you may be invited to take part in more than one interview. All the interviews will be tape recorded and then transcribed and you will be given a copy of the transcript so you can check the contributions you have made.
The texts of the interviews will be collected and stored on a computer database, but no names or personal details will be stored there. You can be assured that your contributions will be kept safely and no-one else will have access to that database. You will be asked if you are happy for your name (first name only) to be included in the writing up of the research and any quotes that may be used, or, if you prefer you can choose a fictitious name for that purpose.

It is hoped that this research will give a voice to people who are contributing to the life and ministry of the church in such a valuable way and will increase our knowledge and understanding of the experiences of older people who are exercising ministry in the church.

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS TO KEEP, TOGETHER WITH A COPY OF YOUR CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Research Project to Explore the Ministries of Older People in the Church

This research project is part of studies for a Professional Doctorate in Practical Theology, with the Cambridge Theological Federation and Anglia Ruskin University. Its purpose is to explore and find out more about the ministries that are exercised by older people in the church and especially what helps them and sustains them in those ministries. We live at a time when there is much in our news about the needs of ageing populations and the church as a whole is also concerned to understand more about what this means for its life and ministry. Recently there has been a growing amount of study into the support of older people in the church, how to best meet their pastoral and spiritual needs and this is very valuable. However, there has been much less written about the ministries that older people themselves are exercising in our churches.

You are invited to be part of this research, which will involve some interviews to share your thoughts and experiences of ministry, because of your involvement in the Story Sharing Group that began during the time of my ministry with you..
The research is being organised by Ruth Goatly and will be written up as part of the thesis for the Professional Doctorate.

If you want any further information about the research or what is involved in it, please do not hesitate to speak to me, either directly in person, or by phone (contact details above).

Your Participation in the Research Project
You do not have to take part and do not have to explain anything if you decide not to. If you do agree to take part, you can withdraw from the project at any time and that includes withdrawing any information that you may have given while the research is running.

If you agree to take part, you will be invited to take part in an interview which will be tape recorded and then transcribed and you will be given a copy of the transcript so you can check the contributions you have made.

The texts of the interviews will be collected and stored on a computer database, but no names or personal details will be stored there. You can be assured that your contributions will be kept safely and no-one else will have access to that database. You will be asked if you are happy for your name (first name only) to be included in the writing up of the research and any quotes that may be used, or, if you prefer you can choose a fictitious name for that purpose.

It is hoped that this research will give a voice to people who are contributing to the life and ministry of the church in such a valuable way and will increase our knowledge and understanding of the experiences of older people who are exercising ministry in the church.

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS TO KEEP,
TOGETHER WITH A COPY OF YOUR CONSENT FORM

Participant Consent Form

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:

Title of the project: Exploring the Ministries of Older People in the Church

Main investigator and contact details:

Members of the research team:

1.   I agree to take part in the above research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet which is attached to this form. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

2.   I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, for any reason and without prejudice.

3.   I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded.

4.   I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.

5.   I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.

Data Protection: I agree to the University[3] processing personal data which I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me*

Name of participant (print)…………………………Signed……………….……Date………………

Name of witness (print)……………………………..Signed……………….……Date………………

<div align="center">YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP</div>

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please complete the form below and return to the main investigator named above.

Title of Project: Exploring the Ministries of Older People in the Church

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY

Signed: _____   Date: _____

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[3] "The University" includes Anglia Ruskin University and its partner colleges

Exploring the Ministries of Older People in the Church

Interview Schedule

Name to be used
Age

What generally does the word ministry mean to you

What form your ministry has taken so far:

what brought you into ministry in the first place.

How would you say that your ministry has changed as you got older?

What has sustained you in your ministry?

What have been the main challenges to you in ministry

Has that changed as you have got older

What challenges do you see to you now as an older person in the exercise of your ministry?

Thinking more generally about older people in the church – do you have any thoughts or observations on how the church uses older people in ministry?

Thank you for taking part in this research.