

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

**Where words meet The Word:
An exploration of a theopoetic paradigm
for ministry of word.**

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ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY
ABSTRACT
FACULTY OF ARTS, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
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An exploration of the possibility of a theopoetic paradigm for ministry of word and its influence on formation for Reader ministry.

SALLY BUCK: June 2017

Reader ministry in the Church of England and in Wales accounts for a significant percentage of licensed ministry being offered particularly in parishes and chaplaincies. However, when working with Reader candidates and licensed ministers with responsibility for formational education, it became apparent that very little has been written about this ministry from a theological or vocational perspective. It has been the intention of this research to overcome this gap in knowledge and understanding in a way that adds to the small corpus of work about Reader ministry in general, explores a theology of ministry of word in particular and improves my own practice and thus the quality of formational education offered to the Readers among whom I work.

An inductive research project was designed incorporating a co-operative research group and a conversational form of interviews to investigate the possibility of a theopoetic paradigm for ministry of word which might then inform the practice of Reader education.

The research group's phases of reflection and action resulted in the emergence of a number of key topics. Interviews were transcribed and presented in the form of found poems. Topics and poems were then examined, themes grouped and related to further literature. The resulting theopoetic paradigm emerged from this interpretation of the data.

The conclusion is that it is possible to communicate theological and vocational understanding of Reader ministry of word in terms of a theopoetic paradigm which is trinitarian in nature; creative, embodied and transformative and expressed through the lens of Gerard Manley Hopkins' concepts of inscape, instress and selving. This paradigm contributes to theological and practical understanding of lay ministry of word and to research methods in pastoral theology and poetics.

Key words: Reader ministry, ministry of word, theopoetics, inscape, instress, selving.

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The thesis sections and chapters are named with reference to the process of creating a poem. Acknowledging the inspiration, finding the words, giving those words structure, performing the created work and seeking and responding to critique are all part of the creative act of writing a poem. The theme of this research is poetic, from its inspiration through its design, into its conclusions and recommendations. Its contents, their naming and shaping, grew out of, and now frame, that whole process.

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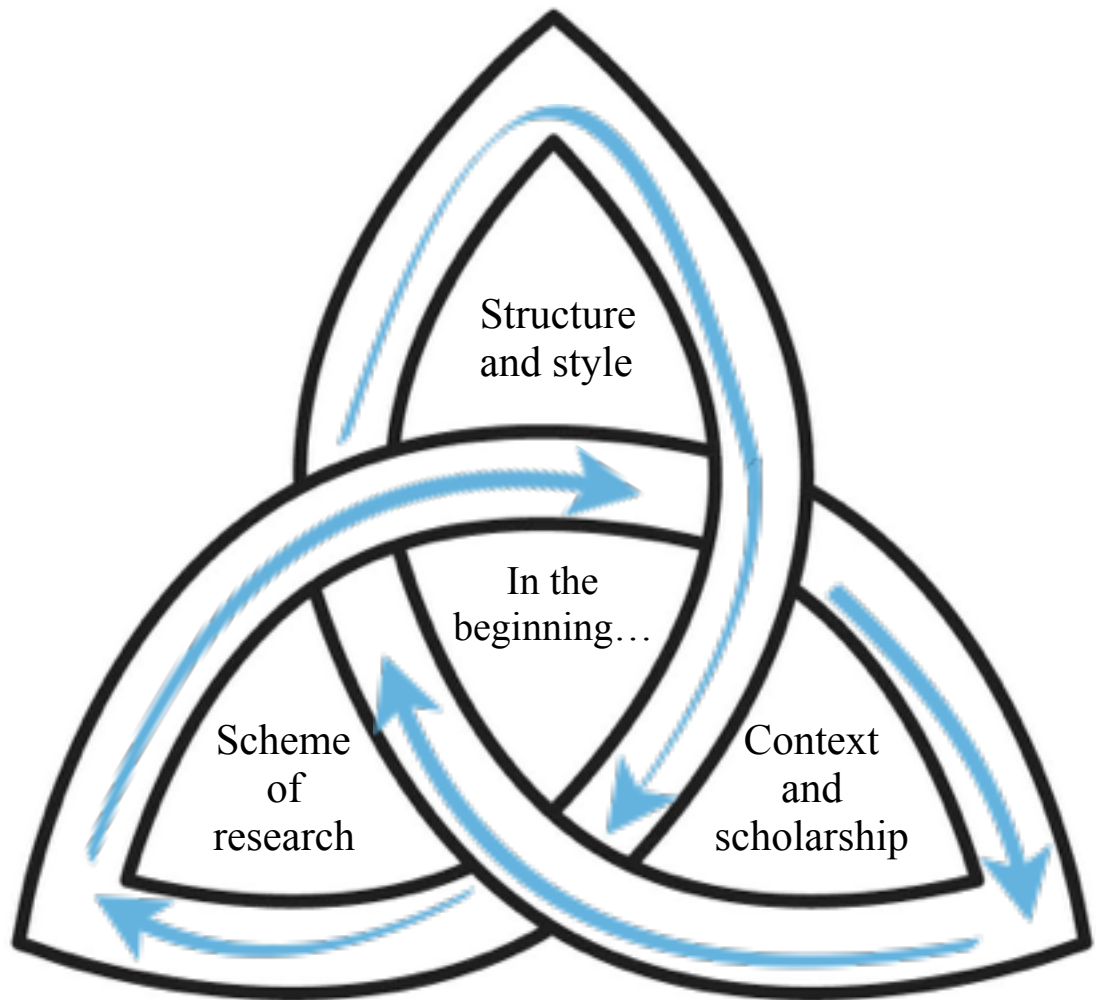
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Section 1
Preparing the Way



“To defend a view which seeks to do justice to both the constrained and the creative in our speaking about and apprehending of the world is, I believe, an imperative in a culture where one or the other seems in constant danger of being forgotten, in shapeless ideas of liberty and autonomy or in mechanical notions of what counts as ‘real’ or ‘hard’ knowledge. And the job of theology is surely to join in the struggle against the dehumanizing prospects of both these distortions.”

(Williams, 2014:197)

In the beginning - introduction to the thesis

A poet is,
before anything else,
a person who is passionately
in love with language.

(W.H. Auden)

The genesis of this thesis seemed at the time to be a very simple question. Being responsible for the formation of people preparing for a licensed lay ministry in the Church of England I wanted to know what others had written about the subject. The fact that the answer to my question was 'very little' has resulted in a five year search for an understanding of the theology, ontology and practice of Reader ministry. The work has become very personal. This thesis is an academic account of a piece of research into an aspect of my own professional context. It has also become, as the research project has progressed, writing about a topic with which I have fallen passionately in love; the ministry of word as embodied in Readers' vocation, identity and skills as wordsmiths.

The research subject is **an exploration of the possibility of a theopoetic paradigm for ministry of word and its influence on formation for Reader ministry.**

What follows communicates a number of levels of learning. Through the generous sharing of their stories, Readers in my diocese have helped me to understand more deeply the vocation to, and practice of, lay ministry of word. Much of the learning took place as a result of work carried out in Stage One of the Professional Doctorate and written about in detail in Papers 1 and 2 (Appendices 1 and 2, pages 157 and 177). This early consideration of the topic led me to recognise the importance of the work of the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins in my own spiritual and vocational formation. As a result of this realisation his poetry was a natural first port of call in my more general exploration of a possible theopoetic paradigm. Therefore, those who have researched the life and work of Gerard Manley Hopkins and collected his correspondence and poems (Pick, 1942; Gardner, 1953; House, 1959; Ballinger, 2000; Cooper, 2005) have enlightened my search for rootedness in my own identity as a Reader as I designed the research method and interpreted the findings. In the work of Hopper (1962), May (1995), Wilder (2001) and Callid (2014), I have learned of an aspect of theopoetics that coalesces in my working definition of theopoetics as that which crafts and re-crafts understanding of the divine from existing language, fully engages with everyday experiences and which subverts attempts to confine theology to thought processes. Investigating the possibility of a theopoetic paradigm for ministry of word that relates to Readers' understanding of their vocation and is

not simply a personal expression of my own vocational understanding has led to learning about appropriate research methods for the collection and analysis of qualitative data. Designing and experiencing a project based on co-operative inquiry informed by the work of Heron (1996), Kvale (1996) and Heron and Reason (2001) has taught me many research skills and deepened my understanding of the researcher/research subject relationship and dynamics. An understanding of poetic research methods was gained from the work of Richardson (2002), Brady (2009), Galvin and Todres (2009). This work builds on my own learning and contributes to the corpus of work relating to poetic research in pastoral theology developed by Pryce, Slee and Walton. Many of their works are considered throughout this thesis. In addition, engaging with the methods of reflexive research encouraged by Finlay and Gough (2003) and Etherington (2004) has resulted in significant personal learning and growth in understanding at every level of existence. This personal learning is reported throughout the thesis in sections of reflexive response. I owe much to the many works of Slee and Walton in particular and to many other poets and theologians in general for the part that their work has played in my personal development. This research has created my own personal experience of change and has deepened my awareness of a form of knowing that now impacts on everything I do. The processes of learning involved in researching, sharing the information gained and observing my own responses to the adventure has been one that has required stamina, sometimes bravery, and not a little discomfort. It has, though, resulted in a much more self-confident and intellectually and emotionally fitter version of the person who started out on this journey five years ago.

As will emerge in the recounting of the research, the central theme has become that of poetics. For this reason, the structure of the thesis is built around the process of preparing for, writing and sharing a poem: preparing the way, finding the words, the performance and the review. Each of the sections of the thesis is divided into chapters, the structure of which is explained below.



A trinitarian model is used throughout in the form of the triquetra celtic knot. This symbol is a reference to the fact that the theology of lay ministry of word emerging from the research is a trinitarian one of creation and re-creation, incarnation and transformation. This is not a doctrinal statement, but a recognition borne out of the heuristic process of the research that to talk of the nature of God, and indeed of

human beings, relies heavily on relational language. The doctrinal statements in the Christian creeds are limited by language, by their apparently masculine imagery and their need for succinctness. However, the trinitarian images used in this thesis are an attempt to express “the radically trinitarian character of human existence lived and understood within the framework furnished by the Creed” (Lash, 1992:33). The terminology relates to God who creates and is known in creation and in human beings who, being creatures, can know themselves to be “indwelt, inhabited, by the gift of God’s own self” (Lash, 1992:54). It considers the impact of the Christian belief that in Jesus God appears - embodied, bringing “all things to life in God” (Lash, 1992:73) and ensuring that everyday experiences of suffering and darkness are included in the consideration of embodied expressions of ministry. This theme of embodiment and Jesus bringing ‘all things to life in God’ is further developed with reference to Sophia and the work of Johnson (2002) and Schuessler Fiorenza (1999) as part of the research’s theological context.

Within each of the sections of the thesis there are elements of creativity, exploration of what it means to live out the lay calling to ministry of word along with embodied responses to the research data itself and an intentional emphasis on how Reader ministry might be transformed and transformative at both individual and corporate levels as a result of the knowledge and understanding gained from the research process. The triquetra knot also represents something that allows movement. It is possible to continually follow the pattern around. The subject matter of this thesis has to be divided into sections and the sections have to be subdivided. This is the only way in which the process and its findings can be articulated for the purposes of an examinable doctoral thesis. However, many of these divisions are not fixed. The topics inform each other. There is overlap and movement between them.

Section 1 considers all that was needed to prepare the way for the empirical research. It begins with this chapter which introduces the overall form of the thesis. Also in the *preparing the way* section is a chapter entitled *inspiration*. This considers two elements of the background to the research: the context in which it is set (professional, personal and theological) and the existing literature relating to the topic. The consideration of the literature begins with that which has been written about Reader ministry. The lack of significant literature about Reader ministry as a vocational choice led to a consideration of how thinking about ministry of word might be advanced. Building on the work relating to the context and combining professional and personal contexts led to an investigation of the work of Gerard Manley Hopkins in particular and more generally themes contained within the discipline of theopoetics. The patterns that emerged from the context and literature led to the development of a *scheme* in poetic terminology which is expressed in relation to this research in a chapter concentrating on the identification of the gap in

knowledge, the wording of the research question and the development of a conceptual framework. From this comes the research design, which is described in detail in the final section of this chapter.

Section 2 considers the process of finding the words; gathering the data and working with that data to make meaning from it. The first part of the process of giving word to a poem is to find the *narrative*. In research terms, and recounted in the first section of the chapter, this narrative was gathered through interviews and in a research group. The information then needed to be interpreted and communicated. The method of making meaning from the data and the poems that resulted, along with the responses of the participants when they were revisited with the words that had been crafted from their conversations makes up the second part of the chapter entitled *narrative*. The rest of this section is dedicated to writing about what I have called the *stanzas*. The three emerging themes relate back to Hopkins' concepts of inscape, instress and selving and are considered in detail and presented, but not interpreted, in this chapter.

Section 3 is entitled *the performance*. A poem is intended to be heard. All of the work put into preparing for its construction and finding the language with which to express the ideas culminates in the performance and the hearing of the poem by others so that the acoustic effects, the onomatopoeia and the poetic metre can have their greatest impact (Lineberger, 2016). Likewise this research is intended to be shared. Section 3 presents the interpretation and development of the themes identified in the stanzas of section 2. Three areas of performance are considered, all presented as one chapter. The first two areas are entitled *effect*. As defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, an effect is "a change which is a result or consequence of an action". In this case, the action is the research and the change is its contribution to understanding of Reader ministry and what might happen as a result of that new understanding. Two effects of the research are considered; its contribution to knowledge and its contribution to practice. I propose a framework building on the three stanzas referred to in section 2 upon which formation programmes for Readers, both in training and in ongoing ministerial education, might be based. The third section of this chapter is entitled *affect*, still relating to change, but that change which the Oxford English dictionary identifies as coming from something with the capacity to "touch the feelings; move emotionally". This section examines in detail my own reflexive response to the research process and my influence on its findings.

Any work shared with a wider audience opens itself up to the scrutiny of the reviewer. **Section 4** of the thesis acknowledges this need for critical *review* in three chapters. The first is my own critical evaluation of the research, informed by feedback gathered from supervisors, student colleagues, research participants and

others as the work has developed. The next chapter considers further research possibilities emerging from this work and the third offers an overall conclusion.

The three papers submitted during stage 1 of the doctoral process are included as appendices. Other appendices are factual; participant information, research application and ethical approval forms as well as extracts from interview transcripts, group data recordings and found poems. This thesis represents a journey of discovery and some of the reflexive journal entries and reflexive poems are also included as a way of charting the personal impact of the research.

My very first journal entry was surprisingly insightful. The day after I received the offer of a place on the DProf programme this was my entry:



The prof doc is beyond this gate for me now. It's a beautifully worked, artistic gate, but it leads to something a bit disorganised and scrubby in places. The adventure is in the exploration. The real delight is that I have to go there (predominantly) alone... All of the documentation that arrived yesterday says I have to be pushing the boundaries – investigating and exploring on my own off the beaten track.

Who knows what might be hidden in the undergrowth. I'm sure there will be lots of stinging nettles. But hopefully I'll also find some rare and beautiful flowers which will bear fruit or seeds and I can be responsible for sharing them and giving others the chance of nurturing and cross breeding them.

It's quite scary, but incredibly exciting.

I've been saying for a while that I need an adventure. I think I'm just about to embark on one.

Inspiration - the material on which the work is based

Contexts

Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells'
Selves - goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,
Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.*
(Hopkins)

Professional Context

My professional context has developed while the research has been taking place. The initial motivation, however, remains key. I was licensed as a Reader¹ in 2000. I have been involved in ministry training for a number of years. In 2010 I became responsible for formation in the initial stages of ministry training for both ordinands and Reader candidates. This training involves three years of theological education and ministerial formation. I was aware of the need to offer vocationally specific formational training. Literature searches revealed a wealth of material relating to the vocation and formation of a priest. However, very little has been written about the vocational ministry of Readers. What a Reader can do seems to have been considered to be more important than any ontological or existential consideration of what it might mean to be someone called to a lay ministry of word. In an attempt to avoid the dualistic, and potentially negative, language of priest versus non-sacramental minister, I sought to understand what it was that we were aiming to develop through ministerial formation of our Reader students. The challenge of dualisms has continued to be a theme throughout the research.

When this research began I was aware of a sense of dis-ease in the Reader body in my own diocese. Conversations with Readers from around the country and comments in the regular publication of the Central Readers Council, *The Reader*, seemed to substantiate this sense of a lack of a positive sense of identity amongst Readers. I knew anecdotally that Readers did have a sense of calling to lay ministry of word. I was challenged to find a way of expressing this positively by Smith's words:

We're seen as half-baked clergy. We are used to fill the least popular slots on the rota and many feel that they're treated as if they have a fag end ministry. Why should a calling to preach

¹Readers are lay people who have been selected, trained and licensed by the Bishop of a diocese to preach, teach and lead worship in a pastoral context. There are more than 10,000 active Readers in the Church of England. Most are licensed to a parish but some are chaplains in prisons, hospitals, hospices or schools, a few are in charge of parishes. (Church of England website - <https://www.churchofengland.org/clergy-office-holders/ministry/readers.aspx>)

and to teach be regarded as part of the path to receiving a dog collar? Can our Church affirm lay ministry not as a second class calling?

(Smith, 2006)

This final question posed by Smith “Can our Church affirm lay ministry not as a second class calling?” led me to wonder who is “our Church”? If, as a Reader involved in theological education, I did not have a positive model to offer to the students in my care, who else was going to attempt to find such a model?

During the time that I have been engaged in this research my professional context has changed. I no longer have responsibility for ordinands’ formation and only peripheral involvement in initial formation for Readers. In my current role as Warden of Readers for the diocese my responsibility is for the pastoral care and continuing education of about a hundred Readers post-licensing. This role has extended my focus for the contextual impact of the research findings. I am now aware of the benefit to the Reader body and the ministry offered in our diocese of formation that enables Readers to have confidence in their own vocation and ministry. There may have been the possibility for the research process to be contaminated due to the change in power dynamics with the change in role. The timing, though, was such that the data collection was completed before any potential impact was felt.

In addition, my professional role involves introducing students to the subject of pastoral theology and theological reflection. My motivation for this research is informed by that role, particularly in respect of the way in which the professional doctorate requires a constant revisiting of the impact that the research is having on the professional context and the practice of the researcher. My desire to get to the heart of what it was to be a Reader in order to develop a framework for formation for that ministry is enlightened by Killen and de Beer’s approach to theological reflection. In order for theological reflection to enable the reflector to reach the “heart of the matter” Killen and de Beer (1994) argue that it must be practised from a “standpoint of exploration”. This thesis positions itself firmly in this tradition of theological reflection and pastoral theology as a significant part of my professional context. The whole of this work, and in particular the empirical research contained within it, has been an exploration. Often the exploration has felt like the exploration of a weed patch in a garden, attempting to find the good soil and flowers hidden amongst so much information and tangled thoughts. Most of the time, though, the exploration has been one of adventure and discovery. The image below is called to mind as I remember my excitement and apprehension in an unknown area where I had been warned that the snakes were beginning to wake up and where no other human beings were in sight. The research exploration has sometimes felt lonely and unknown dangers have been imagined lurking in the grass, but it has been rewarding and exciting at the same time.



The beginning of the path through Malalotja Country Park, Swaziland, on a day of exploration and adventure.

These changing professional contexts led me first to consider ways of gathering information about Reader ministry that could inform the process of formation teaching for those in training. As the research and my professional involvement changed and developed the research has proved invaluable in considering ongoing formational education for all in ministry; pre- and post-licensing.

Previous Professional and Personal Context

My previous professional contexts and an awareness of my own personal history are appropriate topics for consideration as they have had a significant impact on the emphasis of this project. Trained as a Speech and Language Therapist in the late 1970s and later as a counsellor I have come to believe strongly in the power of communication to change circumstances. As a Speech and Language Therapist working with young adults with often catastrophic neurological problems I witnessed the delight when the ability to communicate, even if with artificial aids, was restored. As a counsellor working within the chaplaincy team of a women's prison, I saw women taking responsibility for future choices and experiencing a new freedom when they faced the truth of their actions. This professional background has informed the research, and in particular the original motivation for embarking on the project. Within my present professional context I decided to acknowledge my own part in the lack of positive expressions of vocation to a lay ministry. I have attempted to take responsibility for investigating the subject and communicating something of an understanding of a new way of speaking of this ministry.

As a professional doctorate which is intentionally reflexive² my own story has become key to the research. It came as quite a shock after a number of months of study to realise that this form of research had to be about me. From my own professional context, through the investigation of scholarly works, research methods and the collection of relevant data and then back to my own practice, changed, challenged and informed by all that has been discovered, this research is, in effect, all about me. This fact makes it a demanding and potentially exposing process. I can say now that it has been both rewarding and transformative professionally and personally. However, at the beginning of the process I could not predict this outcome and the personal demand of such a doctorate felt overwhelming for a while.

This is my story

of words,

of life.

Life in all its fulness;

Desperate, dark,

cracked apart

fulness.

Words have damaged, confused,

challenged, calmed, inspired,

comforted and healed.

This is my life-offering;

word-offering.

This is my story.

(October 2014 reflective journal entry)

All of my conscious life I have had a sense that the world of words is where I belong, where I am truly myself. In such a context I relate personally to Hopkins' words quoted in the opening poem of this chapter: 'for that I came'. As a very young child I loved the different worlds experienced through the characters in stories. I am a natural introvert and happy as a 'loner'. Reading and composing stories became my way of finding self-expression and identity. I began to discover the "ontological secret" (Pick, 1942:33) at the heart of my own being; a concept that will be developed in parts 2 and 3 of this thesis. As an A level English Literature student I discovered, in the analysis of Hopkins' poetry, a synthesis of my own love of language and the potential for bringing my critical

² I am using the term reflexive in line with Etherington's definition of researcher reflexivity as "the capacity of the researcher to acknowledge how their own experiences and contexts (which might be fluid and changing) inform the process and outcomes of inquiry" (Etherington, 2004:32). This involves "looking thoughtfully at one's own self - at what I am like, at how I see what is outside of myself, how I affect it, or how my seeing of it affects how I present it" (Bennett, 2013:20)

thinking and experiences of faith together. It is this lifelong passion for words, and desire for all to experience the power of communication through written and spoken word that led me first to my career as a Speech and Language Therapist, then to training as a counsellor and only later to the licensed lay ministry of a Reader in the Church of England which underpins my current professional role.

Training, and working, as a counsellor taught me of the need for creation of a space in which therapist and client can experience congruence, unconditional positive regard and empathic understanding (Rogers, 1951). Regardless of the content of therapy sessions, these conditions can enable a healing process to begin. Within a pastoral ministry this ability has the potential to enhance many encounters. Words are essential in the formation of such a space, but so is something more. This was most powerfully experienced during my eight years working as a chaplain in a women's prison. Here I was privileged to work with women from many nations and traditions in a raw and often volatile environment where I became increasingly aware of the power of words to heal and hurt. And here I discovered the power of words to create a space in which the world of pain and violence was transformed.

Furthermore, there are a number of theories suggesting that we only form an understanding of 'self' through narrative (Mead, 1934; Angus and McLeod, 2004; Hutto, 2007; Goldie, 2007; Strawson, 2007), conceiving of our own existence as a special story (Polkinghorne, 1988). It may even be that writing that story offers us a state of disconnection from day to day life which is, in itself, healing and enables the writer to make connections between their understanding of themselves and the world in which they find themselves in a new way (Bolton, 2004: chapter 4). My own childhood experience leads me to agree with these observations. This experience, along with the influence of some inspirational English teachers, was to shape my life and subsequently my own practice of ministry.

Ministry of word then, for me, has been many-faceted. It is often described in terms of preaching and formal teaching, which has been part of my experience. It is however, in my experience, about much more than that. I would identify my Speech and Language Therapy and counselling careers as an offering of what I now identify as a ministry of word. They were vocational responses to a sense that I am called to offer my skills in an environment that is also about creating space for others' words to be heard and respected. It is about offering words that may challenge, but in their challenge may allow the acceptance of difficult truths to bring healing. It is about teaching the faith and teaching skills so that others might gain a deeper understanding of faith. It is about enabling others to hear their own voice in the midst of often very loud scripts that they have carried throughout their lives. Slee (2014:16) points out that, as will be the case for most of us of a similar generation "the texts and ideas I was introduced to were from male writers and thinkers". For women this will have a specific influence and for a woman to find self expression it may be argued that the scripts that develop from the

“mythic masks male artists have fastened over her human face” must be acknowledged and come to terms with “before the woman writer can journey through the looking glass toward literary autonomy” (Gilbert and Guber, 2000:17). Whether we are women or men, not only do we carry academic scripts but personal voices form our opinion of ourselves; parents and grandparents who affirm or criticise our values, teachers whose words lead us to doubt our skills or to find self-confidence and so many more.

I would argue that formation for a ministry of word will be enhanced if it is able to exhibit a depth of understanding of the disciplines relating to the development, use and function of words in our everyday life. This may be said to be true of therapeutic encounters and counselling relationships but contains the added dimension in a licensed ministry of consciously seeking to create space for God to be experienced in the encounter. This intention would be counter-productive (and even unacceptable) in many therapeutic relationships. Within the context of ministry, this understanding can then lead to the skills that enable words to transform normal encounters into encounters with God through the experience of that interpersonal sacred space. To this end my own experience of the past four decades or more places me in what may be a unique position from which to bring insights from a number of perspectives into a new synthesis.

Ecclesial and Theological Context

This work grew out of a desire to find a theological expression of lay ministry of word with particular reference to the ministry of Readers. The reasons for the desire to express this ministry theologically have already been stated. What others have written about Reader ministry has been primarily about function. Very little attention has been paid to vocation and calling. As this research began I was aware that it was located in an ecclesial context and in a theological context.

Readers are lay ministers. As such a Reader is a lay member of the church. It is important to acknowledge that this ministry is one that holds a representational role within the Church of England and in Wales. Readers are licensed by their Bishop and are then accountable; being under authority and being given authority. The term laity has been used as a divisive one asserting the authority of priests and bishops over those who are merely lay members of the church. However, taking the term's rootedness in the word *laos*, the people of God (Gibbs, 1983:318), my intention is to acknowledge that all, including priests and bishops, are part of the *laos*. My interpretation of the term would include all of humanity as being the people of God. Others would use the term as a way of describing those who acknowledge a faith in God. As Readers, ministers whose identity is vocationally lay, it is my argument that

those involved in formal, ecclesially recognised lay ministries, are representative not only of the church to the world, but more specifically are representative of all lay people to the church. All are called and the first response to that calling in the Christian faith is baptism.

As a “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9), we are summoned – clergy and laity alike – through baptism to a common vocation of divine blessing that originates in Jesus Christ. Baptism is the mark of our incorporation into the life of the Church and a commissioning to participate in God’s mission in the world. As such, the Church, as the whole people of God, clergy and laity, gathered and sent, are charged with continuing Christ’s priestly work of blessing, mediation and reconciliation on behalf of the whole of humanity, to bear witness to, and participate in the mission of God.

(Archbishops’ Council, 2017:1).

There are tasks to perform in licensed ministries. There are codes of conduct and working agreements. This research, though, is based not on the function of the lay minister, but on the calling, vocation and theology of lay ministry for those who offer themselves in service of God and God’s people (all people) in a way that is acknowledged in licensing and commissioning by the church.

Practically then, Readers are ministers of word. The role is one of the lay theologian; the preacher and teacher. There is pastoral involvement in the life of the church and for many Readers the majority of their ministry is expressed in a world-facing way. Readers are involved in social action, are Street Pastors, prison and hospital chaplains, among many other obviously ministerial roles and many less clearly defined roles in work-place settings and social gatherings. The theological basis from which I began this research was two-fold. I am rooted in pastoral theology. As a practitioner my desire is for theology to provide a place in which my faith and the world in which I live out my faith can come together in critical dialogue. This work aligns itself with the methods of pastoral theologians identified by Whipp (2013:28) as engaging “with the best learning of their day to provide the fullest possible account of human flourishing”.

In the beginning was the Word,

and the Word was with God,

and the Word was God.

(John 1:1 NRSV)

Readers are ministers of word whose words and theological training is often expressed in pastoral settings. The title of this thesis is Where words meet The Word. The basis

for this title was the theological concept that Jesus is the Word of God. The incarnate Jesus, the Christ, is Logos. According to Greek philosophy Logos was the “unifying, rational principle holding together a world in perpetual flux.... the active source of all existing things, the seeds from which all things come into being”. In post-New Testament writings Logos was understood as “the revealer and interpreter of the invisible, transcendent Father as the rational principle in God” (Sinclair et al., 1988). Logos, the Word of God, is imminent and knowable in the incarnate Christ. It is my belief that a ministry that identifies itself as a ministry of word in a very real sense has a calling to provide words, and sometimes silences, that allow others to encounter The Word; to know themselves to be in the presence of God and to find, in that encounter, a new experience of human flourishing. My understanding of Logos as the revealer and interpreter of the Father held within it an intuitive sense that there was much more to God’s Word than words.

The starting point for the theological context of this research was, therefore, pastoral and embedded in the concept that the Word of God in Christ, the Logos, inhabits the ministry of those whose vocation is a ministry of word and reaches out through those ministers to meet with the people of God in new and transforming ways. This theology developed as the research progressed and the emerging theological understanding which includes consideration of wisdom literature and the place of Sophia can be found in Section 3 - *contribution to theological understanding*.

Why the professional doctorate?

A number of years ago I began to consider how to develop my own voice in writing in order to address the gap in understanding about lay ministry and to encourage and enable others. I was caught in a situation that I perceived to require me to make a decision between polarised forms of expression. Should I write creatively and poetically from a faith perspective or would I be more effective if I undertook research and presented a PhD thesis? This choice was deeply painful. I felt that whichever future choice I made would necessarily and permanently, given my age and stage of career, rule out the other. Attending a symposium to consider the role of poetics in pastoral theology brought me to a moment when these two possibilities met. Conversations with researchers at the symposium suggested that there was a middle way. The professional doctorate was recommended as a route that could allow for expression of both styles of writing. However, even though tempted by the programme I doubted my ability to create a “sophisticated, conceptually coherent and complex piece of research” which could meet “exacting standards of intellectual rigour and scholarship” (Trafford and Leshem, 2008:36) at the same time as maintaining a level of creativity and writing in a way that my own voice could be recognised. The following piece of creative writing was written with this dilemma in mind.

A dilemma

I find myself, in my imagination, sitting on a high wall. On one side of the wall I am watching a world of order. Everyone seems to know their place and there is a gentle rhythm. People move quite slowly but with a determination that suggests purpose. The dominant colours are black, white and grey. Every now and then a rather official looking, but well-meaning, person hurries around the population gathering information and recording it on a clip board. They are making sure all is in order, everything measured and distributed fairly so that all needs are met and everyone is safe behind the high wall. This world beckons to me. Come and join us. Live with order and clarity. I am tempted to jump off the wall, exchange my randomly selected clothes for the gentle grey habit of those inside. But then I look to the other side and see a world of colour and variety. This world is not so fair. Some people are clothed in thick coats of luxurious materials while others sit in gutters and on the edges in moth-eaten thin garments. This world is not so safe. There are many market stalls attracting attention; much to see and much to distract the inhabitants from their main purpose. In this world people sit around fires and walk by rivers. Some even run perilously close to the water's edge. All the time they are telling stories of life and love, of prosperity and hardship, of sickness, of healing and sometimes of death. It is to this world, unregulated but rich in colour, smell and sound, that I feel most drawn. It is this world that encourages me to risk the drop from the wall. I fit in here in my randomly colourful clothing. I know the value of the world the other side of the wall. I need to talk with people from that world to hear what they find out as they collect their information. But I know I couldn't make my home there.

This story led to the realisation that if there was to be a research project it would have to be one that was sustainable and in which I could participate authentically. I am passionate about my work and because of that passion and my own history, any research had to impact on me as well as offering new theoretical insights into my professional context. In addition, the professional doctorate's essential focus on praxis, which was to prove both encouraging and challenging, offered an opportunity to challenge the potential polarisation of academic versus practical ways of knowing. And so the professional doctorate journey began.

Reflexive response

As this research has progressed I have struggled to find a voice with which to write consistently and authentically about its conceptual and practical aspects. The significance of feminist theologians' voices has grown. In particular, the feminist theology and poetics of Slee and Walton has challenged me to find a language through which I can 'overcome the false polarities and ... forge an authentic 'voice' that does not simply re-inscribe the dualisms' (Slee, 2014:18). My desire to combine creative and

academic ways of knowing has grown, as has my awareness of numerous dualisms which I have attempted to illuminate and challenge throughout the thesis. For this research to be authentic I have needed to walk with those who walk, to sit around fires with those who tell their stories in the midst of life and to risk running close to the water's edge from time to time. Only in that way have I truly been able to engage with the "poetic creativity (which) arises from the mystery of God uttered uniquely in Christ the Word, present as God's image in each human heart" (Pryce, 2014b:2)

Because the poetic has for many centuries been imagined in contrast to the rational, ethical and spiritual it has come to represent (or embody) a rebellious, anarchic and chaotic force that is passionate, possibly decadent, potentially dangerous and, inevitably, female.

(Walton, 2014b:135).

These words had not been published when I began to explore the possibilities of a theopoetic paradigm for ministry of word. They do, however, clearly express a level of ambivalence that I felt towards the topic as it emerged. My desire to be true to my own vocational story and the contexts in which that has been lived out means that the poetic cannot be ignored. The need for a language which combines, rather than polarises, theological truths and liberative actions almost certainly means that I will come over as passionate. The need to write at an acceptably academic level whilst desiring to communicate as honestly and clearly as possible the stories that research participants have shared with me may be a dangerous combination in an examinable piece of work. One factor I cannot mitigate against; I write from a female perspective and I desire to be true to all that that means. I want to communicate rationally, in an ordered way and with clear-cut arguments but everything I have heard in the course of this research takes me back to the need to communicate that which has to do with the use of language as a vocational response to the God who people sense is calling them to be prophetic, subversive and giving voice to the voiceless, amongst many other identifying factors. I am left with no choice if this work is to be authentic. I have to take the risk, to embrace the poetic and to try to express myself in a way that is not too rebellious, anarchic and chaotic but maybe crosses some boundaries and brings to life the stories that have been so generously shared with me as part of this research.

To do this requires attention to detail. This brings to mind the words of Ebenach, who says that "bringing real attention to the world by necessity unhurries us, and at times it seems like more than we can manage" (2010:60). In my desire to finish a piece of work, this attention has not always been easily applied, but I have tried to be unhurried, to pay attention and to represent those who have shared their stories with me in as authentic a way as possible. I offer that detail in the rest of my account of the research project.

Existing Literature

Introduction

Initial reading focused on two areas of writing. First I sought to find works about Reader ministry. As the Professional Doctorate had to have the ability to change my own practice, my next step was to consider material that had shaped and formed not only my professional understanding, but also my own personal and spiritual formation as a way of understanding what motivated my practice. If I was expecting the results of this research to inform ministerial formation in others, I needed to understand more clearly one of the most significant (because it was one of the earliest) formational influences in my own life. This level of understanding would both inform my own development and also enable me to understand more clearly where my own priorities were most likely to influence my hearing of others' stories and interpretation of the data. I therefore read about the life and work of Gerard Manley Hopkins who I somehow felt, having been the person who had first engaged in me the synthesis of faith and academic thought, would have something to say to the topic. As a result of this initial reading I became aware of the link between ministry of word and poetics in my own life and wondered whether there was a more generalisable link to be made. This led to reading about the subject of theopoetics. As the research was intentionally heuristic in nature (Etherington, 2004) it was only after this initial reading had taken place that the research topic became clear. For this reason the bulk of the literature relates to, and is presented in, the chapters on inscape, instress and selving. At this early stage of the process, however, I was unaware of, and unwilling to prejudge, what other reading might be helpful or important. I did not want to prescribe any more than necessary how the gathering of stories from practising Readers might inform the research as a whole. To do so would defeat the aim of the heuristic process to "enable researchers and participants to co-construct meaning" (Etherington, 2004:109).

Reader ministry

Having searched extensively I have to come to the conclusion that there is very little literature on the subject of Reader ministry. I am aware that some works involving empirical research of people in ministry may have included Readers but for the purposes of this research publications referring to Reader ministry specifically were being sought and they are few and far between. There are a number of probable reasons for this paucity of published material. Reader training until the very end of the 20th Century was variable in quality and robustness. Many Readers were trained on non-accredited courses, often in clergy studies being taught with reference to the books on the study shelves. Clergy with particular interests, rather than academic qualifications, would be drafted in to share their knowledge and passion for a subject

with Reader students. While this system encouraged enthusiasm, it did not equip Readers to perceive themselves as being equipped to offer papers or books for scrutiny and publication in the world of academic theology. This situation has changed recently with Reader education being predominantly provided through the Common Awards Theology for Mission and Ministry Durham University validated route. In addition, in the past ten years, Readers have been encouraged to identify themselves as 'lay theologians' (Daunt, 2012a). It may be that this change of emphasis will encourage more Readers to write of their experience of ministry. With the exception of the *Reader Upbeat Report*, referred to below, Church of England reports on ministry focus on ordained ministry. This is understandable as ordained ministry is that which allows the parish system to continue, but does not provide specific material with reference to licensed lay ministries in general, and Reader ministry in particular.

Six books have been written specifically addressing the subject (King, 1973, Hiscox, 1991, Burton and Whitehead, eds. 1999, Kuhrt and Nappin, 2002, Read and Tovey, 2010, Rowling and Gooder, 2011). Whilst some of these works do refer to vocational lay ministry, they are predominantly descriptive of the history and function of the Reader. One exception, *Christ is the Morning Star*, edited by Burton and Whitehead (1999) brings together talks from a Reader conference and is motivational in nature, but does not contribute an academic, theological perspective to Reader ministry, its vocation or training. In addition, the *Reader Upbeat Report* (2009) commented on Reader ministry as it was at the time and made recommendations for its future. The report was the culmination of a piece of work commissioned by the General Synod of the Church of England following an appeal for Reader ministry to be taken seriously and placed "where it should be within the structures and status of the Church of England, not on the fringes, not as an appendage, not as an add-on when all else fails, but at the centre" (McDonough, 2009). As such, the report focused very much on the practicalities of Reader ministry, making suggestions about licensing, national accreditation, expansion of possible ministerial working environments, encouragement of parishes to utilise the Readers in their midst by giving Readers practical responsibilities and issues of deployment. While the report recognises that Readers will need thorough training, it does not, appropriately given its task, set out to address issues of identity or vocation from a theological perspective. Anecdotally I am aware of a sense by those who took part in the writing of the report that it has not received the attention expected and that many of its recommendations have simply been ignored by the institution of the church and those who govern Reader ministry nationally.

King (1973) does purport to offer a theological argument in favour of Reader ministry. This is, however, based solely on his interpretation of the biblical accounts of Jesus' ministry and his assertion that "it was Jesus' intention that the members of his Church should engage in its work in all ways for which they were suitably equipped" (1973:24). From this interpretation, King somehow deduces that Readers in the 20th Century are

living out this calling and therefore are following a theological mandate. The book continues by offering an historical narrative of Reader ministry and concluding with some very practical recommendations to the Church as it moves into a future with fewer priests. This recommendation is that “the solution to this apparently colossal problem is simple: replace full-time clergy by part-time unpaid ministers” (King, 1973:161). The work begins to sound like a publicity exercise when its publisher, the Myland Fund of the Central Readers’ Board, is taken into consideration. I am particularly disturbed by King’s argument that “provided the experience of the Central and Diocesan Readers’ Boards is fully utilised there will be no difficulty” and that this change is “likely, as has been shown, to result in a raising of standards” (King, 1973:161). If there is to be a study of any possible theological basis for Reader ministry it must begin from a “standpoint of exploration” (Killen and deBeer, 1994) with “critical reflection on situations” (Swington and Mowat, 2006:vi) and offering “philosophical, conceptual, methodological and practical” insights as a result of demonstrating “characteristics of scholarship” (Trafford and Leshem, 2008:97).

More recently, Rowling and Gooder have written with those exploring the possibility of Reader ministry in mind. They state that “Reader ministry isn’t a concept or an idea or a theory but an outworking of God’s gifts and graciousness in the lives of those who are called to it” (Rowling and Gooder, 2011:104). Whilst agreeing with this statement, I would argue that without any consideration of the concepts, ideas or theories that might enlighten that “outworking of God’s gifts and graciousness” there is a risk of Reader ministry being understood only in terms of practical outworking and lacking in any conceptual foundations. Almost in acknowledgement of that lack of theological, conceptual underpinning, two of the six “Readers” Rowling and Gooder quote as examples of those with particular, defined, ministries have been ordained, at least in part because of the complexities involved in being Readers in leadership roles within the Church of England.

In the existing works on Reader ministry, “most of the discussion quickly moves from a general view of the laity in the Church to ordained ministries” (Tovey 2016:30). It is my hope in this thesis to suggest one possible way of considering Reader ministry from a conceptual and theological perspective that will not remain in the realm of concepts but will offer a significant contribution to practice as well as knowledge and understanding about this discrete lay ministry.

To begin to explore a basis for the concepts that might relate to the aspect of Reader ministry that is referred to as ministry of word I turned to the person and the work of Gerard Manley Hopkins. His use of words, rhythm, observation and honest recounting of his life of faith offer a starting point for further thinking.

Gerard Manley Hopkins

My first serious encounter with the combined worlds of poetic analysis and faith was as a teenager through the work of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Hopkins' influence has not only been as a result of the thoughts expressed through his poetry, but also in the way he wrote and the way he conceptualised his work. A critical consideration of Hopkins' work was essential if this thesis was to engage openly with my story in a way that was transparent and aware of factors that might influence the outcome of the research. This consideration proved to be significant as it led me on to examine the aspects of theopoetics which have formed the basis for this research project.

Hopkins was a Jesuit. As such he came from an intellectual Catholic order founded on the intentions and rules established in the 16th century by Ignatius of Loyola. Founding schools and colleges across Europe and America, the Jesuits lived to a strict rule of life which encouraged serious scholarship from within its order (Shore, 2007). In addition to an acknowledgment of this context, an examination of the work of Hopkins has to be informed by an understanding of the influence on Hopkins of the 13th century philosopher Duns Scotus. Scotus, whose work influenced Hopkins' thinking in his time in Oxford, offered an intellectual Franciscan view of the world (Cross, 1999:7). The high regard with which Hopkins held Scotus is evident in this stanza of his poem Duns Scotus's Oxford

Yet ah! this air I gather and I release
He lived on; these weeds and waters, these walls are what
He haunted who of all men most sways my spirits to peace
(Hopkins)

It seems to me that two of Scotus' concepts may have had considerable influence on Hopkins in a way that now influences my thinking and this research project. Scotus took great interest in the study of what constituted existential, concrete and individual reality. He, in turn, was influenced in his thinking by Richard of Middleton who is said to have believed that "the act of existence is itself the principle of individuation..... What makes a thing be itself (its individuation) is also what makes it exist as the thing that it is" (Mulholland, 2010:122, 123). This, together with Scotus' ideas about intuitive knowledge which stated that it was possible to have a specific kind of intellectual understanding of things which was to be gained "only by being in the presence of its object" (Cross, 1999:123) sounds very much like Hopkins' concepts of inscape and instress which are considered in greater detail below.

Hopkins' influence in my young adult life was significant through the sprung rhythm of his poetry and his concepts of inscape; "the objective reality that exists independent of the beholder" and instress; "partly the response of the beholder and partly the force of

being which links the object and the beholder" (Ballinger, 2000:54). Hopkins' poetry gave me access to a sense of the divine that had to do with his desire "to communicate an 'inscaped Christ' that may then be 'instressed' in the hearer" (Ballinger, 2000: 229).

Writing with particular reference to the artistic, philosophical and theological influences on Hopkins, Ballinger states that

with assistance of the Spiritual Exercises, Hopkins created the beginnings of a synthesis between delight in beauty and selfless dedication to God, between aesthetic experience and the experience of the Logos as the meaning-giving and 'beautiful' centre of creation.

(Ballinger, 2000: 70).

It is this syntheses, between the "aesthetic experience" and the "Logos as the meaning-giving and 'beautiful' centre of creation" that I would argue is important when considering what it is that enables peoples' experience of ministry of word to transcend syntax and semantics. Ballinger claims that Hopkins "held that we are created through God's self-utterance, the Word" (Ballinger, 2000: 75). It is this theology, combined with the poets craft, that I will argue offers us the beginnings of an answer to how meaning-giving and beauty might be offered through ministry of word. In his Journals and Papers (ed. House, 1959: 298) Hopkins states that inscape can be caught and communicated through "speech framed to carry the inscape". For Hopkins this was about poetry, but it could be argued that this intention for speech - a poetic intent to convey the incarnational aspects of faith - is an essential component of any ministry of word. Whether the speech is in the form of a sermon, a formal teaching session or a conversation, it is possible for the speaker's intention to be to carry the inscape of the incarnated Word.

Hopkins did not, in his journals or his notebooks, define inscape or instress. Many scholars writing about Hopkins have attempted to explain them and the influence of the concepts on the latter part of this thesis makes them worthy of consideration here. One such scholar is Peters, a Jesuit, writing in 1948. He says

it was his spiritual outlook on this world that made inscape so precious to Hopkins; the inscape of an object was, so to speak, more 'word of God', reminding him more of the Creator, than a superficial impression could have done (Peters, 1948: 6).

Pick (1942:33), when speaking about inscape, often refers to the "ontological secret" of an object's innermost being. "I do not think I have ever seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of our Lord by it. Its inscape is mixed of strength and grace". (Hopkins, 1870 in House, ed., 1959: 199)

To find a way of discerning this 'ontological secret' in every encounter in ministry of word, and then to transform the encounter into a meeting with the creator, may be an overly ambitious hope. An ability to begin to look closely and find something of that secret which can access the beauty at the centre of creation may not be. It is this ability that I would suggest marks out ministry of word that moves into an encounter with the divine (words meeting The Word).

Another of Hopkins' concepts is that of instress. Pick says that

instress is a word that (Hopkins) attached to the intensity of feeling and associations which something beautiful brought to him and a desire to convert it to God (1942: 32).

Where inscape speaks of the essential make-up of the created thing, instress speaks of its impact on another. Inscap can be described; instress cannot - it can only be expressed as an impression. Instress, therefore, is an important concept even if there are few ways of expressing its affect other than through many, and varied, qualitative expressions. Peters points out later in his work that Hopkins, when he is concentrating on theological writing rather than philosophy, uses the term 'instress' as almost synonymous with 'feeling'. Not the feelings that are related to mood, however, but those that arise from contact with the inscape of an object (Peters, 1948: 16,17).

By close, solitary, contemplative examination of this world, Hopkins seems to have come into a deeper relationship with God. His awareness of creation leads him to an understanding of Christ. It is not possible for many people to dedicate so much time to looking closely and deeply at individual objects. But the legacy of Hopkins' work is that it is possible to have an awareness of the possibilities of encounters which acknowledge inscape and instress. Ministry of word that begins to engage with these concepts may also offer the beginnings of a reverence for all things as representative of God himself and thus offer a relational, pastoral, theology to underpin the skills taught as formation for such a ministry.

Whilst these writings about Hopkins have been influential in my own understanding of ministry of word, they do not provide sufficient up to date scholarship on which to base a research project into the nature of Reader ministry and its formation. The more contemporary scholarship relating to the topic of theopoetics further develops this work.

Theopoetics

Just as in conversation we implicitly ask each other for a different - even if only slightly different - 'take' on the environment we share, so with extreme, poetic, metaphorical, ritualized and formalized speech, we converse with ourselves, with our unexamined perceptions, our half-conscious associations of sounds and sense alike, and are ready to be surprised by what associations may arise. Poetic practitioners will often speak about the experience, in the composition of poetry, of listening, of being taken aback by what is heard and then said. And the poetry that results may set out to reconstruct perception as if things were indeed being seen anew.

(Williams, 2014:135)

Seeing things anew is the aspiration of this research. Literature relating to a theopoetic understanding is intended to examine one possible way of seeing things anew in the realm of formation for Reader ministry.

My original working definition of theopoetics in terms influenced by the work of Wilder (2001) was that of a crafting of words which results in the shaping (poiein) of an experience of the divine (theo). It is this definition that has informed this investigation. It is not possible, however, to locate myself in such a seemingly simple operational definition without a more detailed examination of the works that have led me to consider it a sound starting point. The use of the Aristotelian 'poiesis' risks locating my definition of theopoetics in opposition to phronesis, practical wisdom, and that is not my intention. My thinking is much more in line with that of Walton (2014a) in desiring a closer relationship between poiesis and phronesis. The skill of the wordsmith incorporates both ways of knowing. It seems to me that to identify Readers as artisans, described as expressing "their belief that their experiential knowledge was as certain as deductive knowledge" (Smith, 2004:59) might locate their work in the realms of both poiein and phronesis.

My journey into the world of theopoetics developed with a conversation with the work of Karl Josef Kuschel. An exploration of Kuschel's work *The Poet as Mirror* (1997) can be found in appendix 1 (pp.156-180). In this work he asserts that "poetics differs from poetry as theology differs from faith" and that "theopoetics is giving an account of an appropriate discourse about God which corresponds to the present-day consciousness of language and time" (Kuschel, 1997:216). Readers are people whose ministry is often expressed as much in their everyday work and social environments as it is in a church setting. An understanding of theopoetics as relating to the present-day is significant. Theopoetic texts are vehicles taking readers and hearers into another world whilst, at the same time, bringing clarity to everyday life by offering reflections on, and

formal thinking about, the nature of meaning-making (Miller, 2010, Callid, 2014). If ministry of word enables everyday encounters to transcend words, then theopoetics not only allows for “appropriate discourse about God” (Kuschel, 1997:216) but also invites the shaping and making of space in which God might be encountered. As crafters of words, Readers are engaged, in Ricoeur’s terms, in interpreting “aspects of doing, of being-able to do, and of knowing-how-to-do” through words used as tools for Christian ministry. Ricoeur identifies these aspects in Aristotelian terms as “belong[ing] to poetic transposition” (Ricoeur, 1991:28). It is my belief that the core qualities of this experience equate with poetic processes of paying attention and crafting language. If “poetry is theology leaping out of the file cabinet and into the heart... the Word or words that stir our souls” and if “a poet is a poet because, like Jesus, she sees what is really there” (Leach, 2014) then my hope is that a theopoetic paradigm for ministry of word will help me to see what is really there in people’s vocational experiences and to find a language with which to communicate this in a way that is appropriate to the everyday experiences of those in ministry and the everyday needs of those in training. It is also my hope that training rooted in this ethos will encourage those with a ministry of word to engage honestly with all aspects of life as experienced by those to whom they minister. In this context, Wilder’s definition of theopoetics as the crafting of words which results in the shaping of an experience of the divine (Wilder, 2001) became inadequate. Whilst succinct in nature, it does not sufficiently reference the idea of seeing “what is really there” (Leach, 2014) and the idea that the poetic process involves “confronting one’s emotions with clear vision and a refusal to flinch” (Ebenach, 2010). As a result of these works and the artisanal and feminist concepts which challenge traditional academic ways of knowing, I have redefined theopoetics for the purposes of this research as **that which crafts and re-crafts understanding of the divine from existing language, fully engages with everyday experiences and subverts attempts to confine theology to thought processes.**

Approaching ministry from a theopoetic perspective means that everyday life and actions are being observed in detail, reflected upon and interpreted through words which are formed with care. Relating to the poem forms in the gospels, Wilder points out that they “focus upon the heart and its ultimate response to God” (Wilder, 1971:90). In my naivety I considered this observation and interpretation to sit naturally and comfortably in the corpus of work that identifies itself as practical theology. However, Walton points out that “practical theology is a discipline driven by a compulsion to be useful and in which actions always speak louder than elaborate words” (2014a:138). Maybe this is one reason for the lack of written material about the vocation of those whose ministry is one of word. There may be a level of scepticism about the value of such a ministry. There may also be a level of fear associated with the power of words when taken seriously and applied poetically. If this is so, it is nothing new. Edmundson (1995) considers a similar view dating back to the time of Plato who he claims considered poetry to be deceptive in its engagement with emotion rather than seeking

what Plato considered to be absolute forms of truth based on reason. Holland interprets Plato's attitude to poetry as an expression of Plato's fear of a sensuous style of reasoning: "philosophers make the eternal Logos, Word or Reason inhabit political structures and moral forms, but poets, dangerous poets, make the flesh become word" (Holland, 1997:323). This poetic way of knowing, flesh becoming word, has more readily been associated with the artisan writer seeking to communicate understanding of "practice, praxis and the common good" than it has with the academic. However, when scholarly and artisanal writing come together "the result of this confluence [is] a set of shared values: an emphasis on the union of practice and theory" (Smith, 2004:32). I would argue that not only is this a model for ministry of word as practised by Readers but is also integral to the ethos and methods of the Professional Doctorate.

It is this aspect of Reader ministry that I have investigated. My intention has been to find a way to value the artisanal aspects of ministry of word without diminishing the academic credibility of the research process and reporting. For this reason I have concentrated on one aspect of theopoetic literature. The corpus of literature that relates theopoetics to biblical and literary criticism is acknowledged for its contribution to those fields of study. It is not, however, studied here. The aspect of theopoetics that speaks to this research is that espoused in the teachings of Wilder (2001) which concentrates on the crafting of words which results in the shaping of an experience of the divine as it is embodied in the ministry of word offered by Readers rather than that which allows critical and analytical engagement with religious texts, even though this body of work offers a great deal to the academic content of Reader training.

Scheme

Introduction

Poetic schemes are built around rhyme and rhythm. It is these that hold a poem together, that give it its constructed form, and to which the poet and the reader keep coming back. Likewise, whilst not being in rhyming form or having a rhythm that is based on a spoken metre, this chapter offers to this thesis what rhyme and rhythm give to a poem. All that is in this chapter is what will hold this thesis together. It is what I will keep coming back to. It provides the shape, the rhythm, the substance and the reference point for all that follows.

Identifying the Gap

To fill a Gap
Insert the Thing that caused it—
Block it up
With Other—and 'twill yawn the more—
You cannot solder an Abyss
With Air.

(Emily Dickinson, c.1862)

This research grew out of the frustrations caused by a gap in knowledge and consequentially a gap in practice. The gap was identified when I began to explore others' work which would provide theological and vocational material for the teaching of Reader students on a diocesan training programme. The lack of material created, in my professional context, a gap that was more of a chasm than a crack. At no stage in this research have I felt that I need to guard the gap that I have found so that no-one else fills it before I have a chance to complete my own investigations. The danger has been more that I have felt at times that I could fall into the gap and be so totally overwhelmed by its vastness that I may never be able to find a way out. The words of the poem above are helpful in this respect. "Insert the Thing that caused it - Block it up With Other - and 'twill yawn the more" (Dickinson, c.1862). What caused the gap, or at least my awareness of the gap, was the lack of published material about the vocational and theological nature of ministry of word in general and Reader ministry in particular. As the previous chapter in its consideration of existing literature evidences, this lack of material is not just perceived but real. It has been necessary, to fill the gap constructively, to concentrate on the vocational and theological nature of Reader ministry.

In this chapter I identify the areas of investigation undertaken in order that vocational and theological material could be found. I also consider what Dickinson might call "the Other" in order to explain why some topics that may have made the gap "yawn the more" are eliminated from the inquiry. Two elements of the gap in knowledge are considered in particular; Reader ministry itself and works that unite pastoral theology and theopoetics. Both of these areas have some valuable works on which I have been able to build, but both contain significant gaps in knowledge and understanding.

Following on from the identification of the gap subsections of this chapter record the development of the scheme on which the research was based. These include sections on the development of the conceptual framework and the research question. There is a substantial section dedicated to the research design. The chapter concludes with a section considering a topic which is central to the ethos of this research; reflexivity.

The gap in understanding of Reader ministry

Many questions could have been asked relating to my professional role and the subject of Reader ministry in the Church of England. In the background of my thoughts and reading are a number of questions which contribute to the wider gap in knowledge, but that have not been addressed in this thesis. They are Dickinson's "Other" but need to be acknowledged here so that they do not continue to distract from the sidelines as the thesis progresses.

Given how little research has been carried out in the field of Reader ministry, there are many possible avenues that research into the subject could follow. It would be impossible to attempt to address all of the questions, however interesting they may be and however helpful some additional background information might have been before starting on the theopoetic topic of this research. However, this research has not set out to find those answers. It has not intended to define Reader ministry. The definition being used widely in the church today is that of “lay theologian” (Daunt, 2012a). A substantial research project could be devoted to what this means and how it is worked out in practice, but it is not within the scope of this thesis. Having said that, the results of this work may inform Daunt’s definition. This research has not attempted to collect quantitative data on the activities of Readers in my own, or any other, diocese. This data is available in dioceses and in national reports (Daunt, 2012b). Comparisons could valuably be made offering analysis of how Readers are utilised across the dioceses of the Church of England and Wales, but that was not the aim of this thesis. Many Readers report difficulties in their ministry; communication problems, lack of a sense of identity, pressure to conform to ways of working that they do not see as their vocation or in accordance with their skills (Smith, 2006, Wakeley, 2011). It would be informative, and possibly helpful to the national understanding of Reader ministry, to research the reasons and possible solutions to these problems. There is pain which needs to be acknowledged. There is confusion that cannot be ignored. Dwelling on the negatives, though, would not have resourced my own professional practice and would not have been a happy way to spend up to six years of my life. This research aims to offer a positive voice of identity into the broader conversation about Reader ministry as a whole. I do not underestimate the problems but I have not used this research project to analyse and address them directly.

The intention of this research, though, was to test out the possibility of developing a theopoetic expression of vocational and theological understanding of ministry of word with the potential to develop a new paradigm for teaching and formation of Reader students. It has, in fact, also provided knowledge and understanding that have the potential to enhance the quality of ongoing, post-licensing, ministerial education and training.

The gap between pastoral theology and theopoetics

I have, in this work, occupied apparently contradictory worlds. My aim has been to find an academically credible way of communicating that which is intrinsically artisan. By defining poesis as craft; the shaping of something new from that which already exists; making and remaking (Hopper, 1962, May, 1995, Wilder, 2001), I am accepting, and celebrating, the artisan nature of Reader ministry. I have intentionally expressed the theology of ministry of word throughout this thesis in a theopoetic way; a kind of writing that aligns itself with Holland’s argument that “theology is a kind of writing.... (which)

remains a poesis: an inventive, imaginative act of composition performed by authors” (Holland, 1997:319).

I am also, after initially attempting not to do so, locating myself with feminist theologians who “in contrast to the ethos of empiricism ... celebrate embodiment, emotion and affectivity as instruments for apprehending the world and gaining wise understanding” (Walton, 2014b:9). By choosing to analyse the data from interviews and research group meetings in a poetic form, I am preferencing embodied understanding throughout this research. This embodied form of knowing is beautifully written about by May (1995) when she speaks of her body “being attached anew to the quarry from which (she) was hewn” and longing for “the theological words I had written to become flesh”. Galvin and Todres take this knowing into the realms of research. This aspect of their work will be considered in more detail in section 2 of the thesis in the chapter headed Narrative, but for now I wish to acknowledge that the whole of this thesis is influenced and guided by this sensual, imaginative and affective epistemology. This body-based hermeneutics “goes back and forth between language and the felt sense of the text carried in our bodies” (Galvin and Todres, 2009:308).

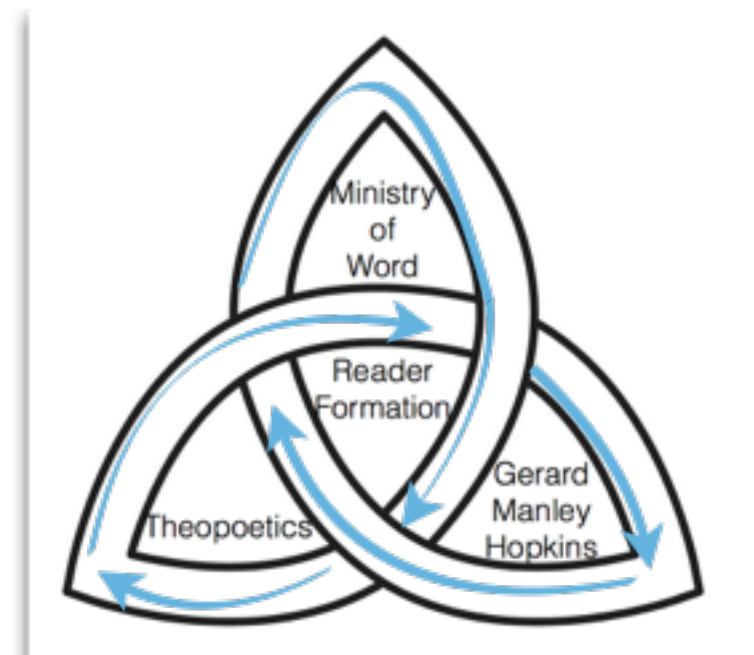
The idea of researching from a theopoetic world-view is attractive but I am not unaware of the risks of doing so in an examinable academic piece of work in the world of pastoral theology. There is something of a gap in existing literature and understanding which places this work on the edge of that gap rather than in the heart of accepted pastoral theology scholarship. I have no intention of taking a stance against reason. I am, however, wishing to challenge the emerging language of targets, outcomes and quantifiable, measurable progress for the formational elements of training for Christian ministry that can be found in the outcome measures used as measures of quality by both Durham University in their Common Awards Programme (2014) and Ministry Division in the measurable outcomes required for ministerial formation (2014). There is value in measuring that which is measurable, but I would argue that there is a pervasively risk-averse attitude that does not inherently encourage the development of those intangible, immeasurable qualities that may lead to prophetic, challenging, uncomfortable expressions of ministry. Two recent pieces of work by Zylla (2014) and Pryce (2014b) have explored the use of poetry in initial and continuing ministerial development. These works are located within the discipline of pastoral theology indicating a developing poetic voice within the pastoral theology academy. Along with works of Slee (2004, 2007, 2011), D’Costa et al. (2014) and Walton (2013, 2014 a, b, c), there is a small but growing corpus of work bringing poetic understanding to topics of pastoral theology. This thesis aims to contribute further to that way of understanding and expressing meaning in relation to people’s lived experiences. In this way it is intended to fill something of the identified gap and to contribute to knowledge.

The aspect of the gap in knowledge that this work does not consider within the body of the research is that of the use of poetry per se, although some consideration is given to this in the conclusions and consideration of possible further research. What I have asked is whether the poetic processes and the qualities of observation and crafting of words might offer anything to the understanding, teaching and practice of ministry of word, and in particular, to developing an awareness of how moments of encounter with God are experienced through ministry of word; times when our words meet The Word.

Conceptual framework

The most important thing to understand about your conceptual framework is that it is primarily a conception or model of what is out there that you plan to study, and of what is going on with these things and why.

(Maxwell, 2013:39)



Just as “the chapters in a thesis should relate one to another to create a coherent and integrated piece of writing” (Trafford and Leshem, 2008:101), so I found that the individual elements of the conceptual framework for the research needed to relate one to another. My intuitive reaction was to feel that my conceptual framework would not stay still. It became apparent that this was a positive aspect of the framework. The aim

of the research was to gain understanding of Readers' identity as ministers of word informed by the concepts intrinsic in the work of Hopkins and the theopoetic writers in order that my own practice in teaching and enabling the ongoing formation of those in ministry might be enhanced and something of that new understanding might be disseminated in order that others' practice might also be informed. None of these concepts stand alone. None can be researched independent of the influence of the others. The threefold celtic knot (the triquerta) enabled the conceptual framework to be visually represented in a way that did not attempt to separate areas from one another but encouraged an acknowledgement of interrelatedness. The trinitarian nature of the symbol became significant as the research progressed and has been adopted as a way of visually representing the content and concepts contained in each of the four sections of the thesis.

Developing the research question

There has been no critical engagement with scholars working in the fields of literary analysis or those engaged in biblical criticism or systematic theology using theopoetic frameworks. They have not been within the scope of this project. The influence that Hopkins' work had on my own sense of calling was not associated with literary criticism of his work. Hopkins' work allowed me to engage honestly and critically with my own faith and, at the same time, inspired me to look closely at life and to write about what I saw and what, in the seeing of life, I saw and understood of the creator. It was the need to explore whether this is a common experience among Readers and therefore something upon which a theopoetic paradigm might be based that drove the participant stage of this research. The scholarship that informed this early stage of research therefore related to this emphasis. The heuristic nature of the research means that further scholarship has informed the interpretation of the data. At this stage, however, it was my intention to avoid reading that might predispose me to interpret the data in any particular way. I therefore looked to theopoetics as a way of making meaning not as an analytical tool and to works that tell of the vocational nature of Reader ministry rather than the practicalities of that ministry in specific church and community contexts.

In the framing of a research question I was not intending to pose a question that required answers that were not congruent with the existential nature of the enquiry so far. To ask a question about *to what extent* Readers considered their ministry to be theopoetic in nature would have required the construction of a unit of measurement. To say that I was going to *analyse the way in which* Reader ministry is theopoetic would have required a more scientific perspective to be applied to the research. In my desire to conduct a research project that would "explore and take seriously the complex dynamics of the human encounter with God" (Swinton and Mowat, 2006:4) as experienced and practiced by Readers, the question, or maybe I should call it the theme, of the research became

An exploration of the possibility of a theopoetic paradigm for ministry of word and its influence on formation for Reader ministry

In section 3 of this thesis all that has been discovered is recounted in a way that evidences not only the potential for such a paradigm and its influence on formation for Reader ministry but also the contribution to knowledge and understanding that this paradigm and the research process that made it possible represent.

Research Design

Welcome to the wildlife area
Come in
But know that I am wild.
Twisted trunks defy order.
Seeds grow where they will.
Thistle and thorn may hurt
and unknown things resist knowing.
Welcome.
Come in!

Extract from a poem written at Summer School, 2013

Swinton and Mowat assert that “qualitative research relates to the careful exploration of the ways in which human beings encounter their world... It takes human experience seriously and seeks to understand and interpret that experience in a variety of ways” (2006:31).

My first student experience was in the 1970s. The course of study involved me in some small-scale social psychology research projects. The methods for data collection were often designed on a whim. I have no memory of any careful consideration of the impact on research subjects nor of the human experience being taken seriously. An awareness of the potential for harm has lived with me ever since. It is therefore important to me that research involving participants has a reason. It is essential that the participants’ “human interest is served” (Bond, 2008) and that people are only asked to participate in that research if their telling of personal stories is the only way that appropriate and sufficient data can be gathered.

The scope of this research

In a previous chapter I have considered the possibility of a theopoetic interpretation of ministry of word from the perspective of my own understanding and passionate engagement with words. If the work was to make any significant contribution to knowledge or understanding that could be rooted in more than one Reader's ministerial and vocational experiences it now became necessary to find out whether others shared my standpoint. Earlier in this chapter when considering the gap in knowledge I have given an account of the possible questions that could have been considered as part of the filling of that gap and the reasons for focusing on those that will be central to this research. In addition, it has been necessary to limit the scope of this research in the decisions that have been made about methods of data collection. As a way of gathering information about the theopoetic nature of Reader ministry, this research could have recorded narratives from large numbers of Readers in order to gather significant amounts of data to be analysed thematically or structurally (Reissman, 2008) or sociolinguistically (Labov, 1997). The choice has been made, for reasons of integrity and congruence with the poetic nature of the research, not to pursue such a method of analysis. A detailed explanation of the chosen method of analysis can be found in the next chapter.

Methodology

My aim for this research has not been the gathering of facts and figures but research findings that will be "like good friends: something that can encourage, advise, stimulate and help us" (Cooper, 2008:1). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) describe one way of considering the role of a researcher as being that of "bricoleur or quilt-maker". Whilst this does not satisfy my desire for neatness, it does allow for the possibility that something creative and beautiful might emerge if the quality of the stories I hear shines through the processes of research design and analysis. In order to hear these stories, and to find their interpretation which can be utilized in my own professional practice, I considered a number of possible approaches to research. Swinton and Mowat (2006) outline research from the perspective of hermeneutic phenomenology. This project falls broadly into their category in that it set out to "listen carefully....., capture something of the essence of the experience....in a way that would be illuminative and transformative" (Swinton and Mowat, 2006:102). However, the way they use interviews and the level of researcher interpretation of the data is not, in my opinion, sufficiently robust in ensuring that the voices of those being researched are heard above the voice of the researcher. There is also only scant reference to researcher reflexivity which, as a practising member of the group being researched, needed to be a significant part of my own research, requiring me to position myself within the research and to be aware of my impact on the story being told throughout the process (Winter et.al., 1999, Finlay and Gough, 2003; Etherington, 2004).

It was not my intention to record narratives from which I could extract data, but stories from which I could seek to find meaning (Gabriel, 2000 and Boje, 2008).

Stories are emotionally and symbolically charged narratives. They do not present information or facts about 'events', but they enrich, enhance, and infuse facts with meaning. This is both their strength and their potential weakness. Stories will often compromise accuracy in the interest of poetic effect, itself an expression of deeper fantasies, wishes, and desires (Gabriel, 2000:135).

Using stories as a research instrument therefore involves what intuitively feels like a risk. Gabriel's emphasis on story requires researchers to let go of a reliance on quality data being "objective, reliable, accurate etc." and to be willing to "engage personally with the emotions and the meanings that reside in the text." (2000:135). Kvale (1996) suggests that interviews are conversations (InterViews) between equals rather than questions posed by a powerful researcher to a less powerful research subject. By acknowledging that I am not an outside observer of the Reader body, it would be difficult to argue that I could conduct interviews with Readers without my own bias and research hopes being influential. As a result, it was decided to engage in conversations which acknowledge that, for a specified time at least, we were co-researchers.

A further development of the concept of co-researching with a group of peers led to the consideration of a significantly different philosophy of research; an action research project. The most appropriate method within the scope of action research was considered to be that of co-operative inquiry (Heron, 1996). Utilising Heron's methods made it possible to conduct (and be part of) research into the lived experience of Readers in their practical environment. Having identified the Reader body as diseased, there is something very appealing about a concept of research as human inquiry with the purpose being "not so much the search for truth but to heal" (Reason, 1994:10). Recent Theological Action Research methodologies were considered (Cameron et.al., 2010). However, the 'insider' and 'outsider' researcher categories suggested by the team did not sit comfortably with the research to be conducted. In addition, there is a risk to be taken into consideration: in comparing co-operative inquiry with participant action research, Heron (1996:8) says

The initiating researcher in PAR goes out from a privileged setting to co-operate with and help to liberate people in an underprivileged setting, and leaves his or her own privileged setting unchanged. Co-operative inquirers who are exploring the first steps in living in a self-generating culture see their privileged setting as deformed and seek a transformation of it.

Working within the privileged culture of the academic world, I am aware that sometimes my ideas and ideals for Reader ministry are not congruent with the reality of offering

ministry in a small isolated rural parish. What I teach and my expectations of my students may seem to be the offerings of the privileged to those who are financially, numerically and time poor. I desire transformation of that privileged culture so that what I teach reflects the best of the practice of those in these communities rather than risking an unbreachable gap between theory and practice; another dualism which this research has sought to overcome. I do not desire to liberate the underprivileged, but to transform the teaching, assessment and praxis of Reader ministry. Having said that, my conclusions and recommendations to others conducting similar research were not so assured. As recorded in the critique of the research method (p.52) it was not possible, however well-intentioned my research design, to totally eliminate the privilege and influence that being the initiator of the research ascribed to me. I would now argue that awareness of the dynamics, transparency of process and intentionally working to overcome the inherent dualisms of academy and practice are of greater importance than the purity of being an insider researcher. However, I do believe that for this research project carried out at the very specific time in my professional life, this was the most authentic choice of research methodology from philosophical, theological and practical perspectives.

Method

My decision then was to work with a dual methods inductive, co-operative inquiry model after Heron (1996) and Kvale (1996). Heron offers a form of co-operative inquiry that sounds as though it could have been devised with a DProf programme in mind. He writes about the “primacy of the practical” and elaborates by saying

Practical knowledge, knowing how, is the consummation, the fulfilment, of the knowledge quest. It is grounded on and empowered by all the prior forms of knowing, and is immediately supported by propositional knowing, which it celebrates and affirms at a higher level in its own relatively autonomous way. To say that practice consummates the prior forms of knowing on which it is grounded, is to say that it takes the knowledge quest beyond justification, beyond the concern for validity and truth-values, into the celebration of being-values, by showing them forth. It affirms what is intrinsically worthwhile, human flourishing, by manifesting it in action (Heron, 1996:34).

More recently Heron and Reason have stated that they believe one “outcome of good research is ... the creative action of people to address matters that are important to them.” Their statement that this is “not research on people or about people, but research with people” (2001:144) is what led me to believe that a co-operative research project would allow me to access the richest data. This data is not my own, but has been constructed by the whole group increasing the credibility of the research

by enabling participants to check the data's "ability to resonate with [that of] others who have been through experiences similar to the ones being described" (Swinton and Mowat, 2006:122) as the project progressed. This idea led to some concerns at the research proposal stage of this process. Additional information was required and the transcript added to the research proposal arguing for the inclusion of a co-operative research group can be found in appendix 8 (p.225).

The defining feature of co-operative inquiry according to Heron is that "All the subjects are as fully involved as possible as co-researchers in *all* research decisions - about both content and method - taken in the reflection phases." (1996:36). The main features of this research method that resonate with my own motivation for conducting research are that

- There is intentional interplay between reflection and making sense on the one hand, and experience and action on the other
- There is a radical epistemology for a wide-ranging inquiry method that can be both informative about and transformative of any aspect of the human condition accessible to a transparent body-mind, that is, one that has an open, unbound awareness
- The full range of human sensibilities is available as an instrument of inquiry

(Heron, 1996:36. *Bullet points in original text*)

The aspect of research which encourages "interplay between reflection and making sense and experience and action" seems to be describing pastoral theology as defined by Woodward and Pattison (1999); "a prime place where contemporary experience and the resources of the religious tradition meet in a critical dialogue". This is confirmed by the interpretation of pastoral theology in the Research Degrees Handbook (2015:9) as being "methodologically committed to the dialectic between reflection and action". The "wide ranging inquiry method" provides a research model that allows me to follow Heron's model for co-operative inquiry groups whilst also conducting conversational interviews and incorporating both sets of data in the same findings. Finally, acknowledging that "the full range of human sensibilities is available as an instrument of inquiry" allows me to seek appropriate methods of analysing the data which involve more recently developed forms of analysis incorporating ways of knowing that are experienced through the senses, bodily knowing, and not merely traditionally accepted tools of systematic, thematic analysis.

Heron's definition of an internally initiated inquiry is one in which "the initiating researchers are internal to the inquiry focus of the group: they are personally engaged with the culture or practice which the research is about, and this means they can be full co-subjects" (Heron, 1996:40). By this definition I was to be a co-subject in this research and those taking part would be co-researchers. In Heron's terms this was to

be a "full form" inquiry, by virtue of the fact that I would be working together with those who took part in the research at both reflection and action stages, involving "same role" participants, in that everyone involved was to be a licensed Reader in the same diocese. It was also to be an outside inquiry, as the action phases were to be conducted outside of the group setting in people's practice. Participants would then regroup for reflection and to plan further action. The research would involve "open boundaries", as those involved would be engaging with the world outside of the group during the action stages of the research (Heron, 1996:40-44).

In this full form method of inquiry, Heron recommends somewhere between five and eight major cycles of reflection and action, four of which he illustrates diagrammatically as shown in fig.1 below. I was aware as I designed this research that I was asking a lot of my participants. I made sure that this was spoken about openly from the outset. It also transpired that, through this process of inquiry, the participants reported that they gained new insights and skills confirming Heron's claim that "research cycling seeks to convert plausible belief into well-founded knowledge." (Heron, 1996:52).

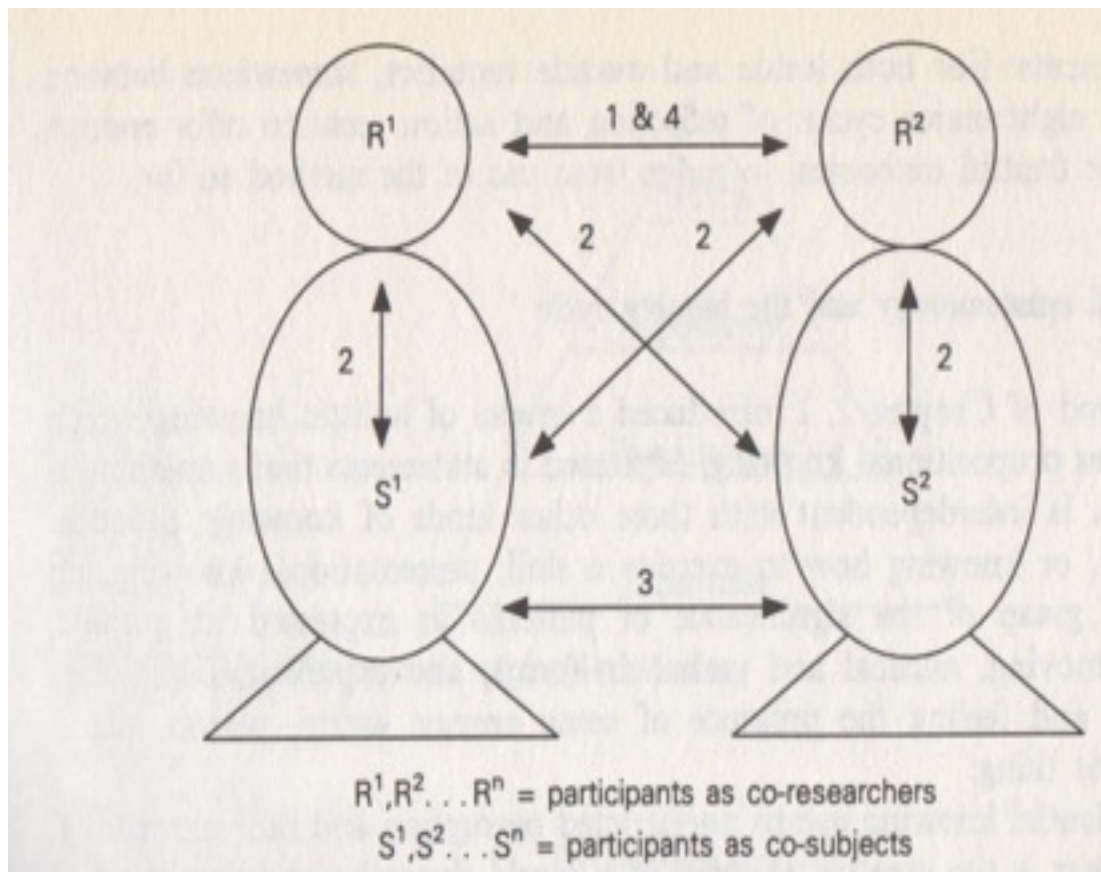


Figure 1 Four stages of full form, inside inquiry. (Heron, 1996: 51)

It is argued that participatory action research (PAR) offers the "primary research approach that bridges the gap between knowledge and practice" (Khan et al., 2013:158). They argue for an acceptance within the academic world, and amongst those who sponsor research, that qualitative research that involves people's stories

and experiences should, ethically, contain an emancipatory, transformative outcome as well as the acquisition of knowledge. This method is akin to Heron's partial form of co-operative inquiry in which the initiating researchers are not fully involved as co-subjects, being the external initiators of the inquiry (Heron, 1996). Even in this partial form of co-operative inquiry, though, there is an intention that the researcher's context will be transformed as an outcome of the research process. This is not the case for Khan et al. (2013). They desire to use knowledge to transform practice, but the form of research that they advocate sees the researcher as the holder of the knowledge and the research subjects as benefiting through the transforming of their practice. This is not sufficient for my research. My practice must be transformed by the knowledge acquired for the purpose of this research to be fulfilled. It is important that the knowledge gained grows out of the stories, reflection and renewed actions of the group and is owned by the whole group. In this way, all will grow in knowledge and all will have the opportunity for transformation of action. I therefore conclude that a form of co-operative research combining InterViews (Kvale, 1996) and Heron's co-operative group is most congruent with the stated aims of the research.

The form of interview used was intentionally unstructured. It is, though, far from being unstructured as a way of gathering information from which later interviews will take their structure, or being used because the "researcher does not know enough about the phenomena to ask relevant questions" (Merriam, 2009:89). It is intended to allow a space in which the conversation that takes place between the researcher and participant leads to a co-operative co-construction of knowledge as they share their lived experience and expand upon one another's understanding (Kvale, 1996). As such it is also a form of co-operative inquiry. There were therefore no pilot interviews or group meetings. The nature of co-operative research is such that it cannot be piloted.

It was important that participants trusted the process so that they would feel able to share personal information about their vocation and sense of calling. My desire was to work with people who felt they had something to share by recording their conversations, telling their stories and reflecting their perspectives by making meaning of their narratives (Flick, 2007, Hurst, 2008, Speedy, 2008). As such it was important that those who took part self-identified as people who felt that Reader ministry was their vocation and who wanted to talk about their experiences of calling and ministry. Large scale projects have the potential for their data to be generalisable and replicable. This scientific language formed my early understanding of research validity in the psychological world of the 1970s. As Swinton and Mowat point out, however, "the fact that there are powerful forces within culture pushing for the supremacy of nomothetic knowledge does not make nomothetic knowledge the only plausible form of knowledge" (2006:42).

This research does not set out to be a survey of typical attitudes of Readers to their ministry. It is, however, a particular development of a concept that originated in my own understanding of my own vocation. The work is intentionally and resolutely conceptual. I have avoided being drawn into research about what Readers do. I shared my initial thoughts about Readers and theopoetics in the participant information sheet which was given to all who expressed any level of interest (appendix 5). A further 'conversation starter' sheet was given to potential participants before the first group session or interview. Therefore those who participated in this research did so because they wanted to explore these embryonic ideas with me. The research was set up to encourage ideas to emerge that would develop or contradict my own initial thoughts. It was not intended to be generalisable but to offer a rich description of how that discussion took place and its findings.

Thus the scope of the research has been local, small-scale and co-operative in nature; not carrying out research on people, but with them (Reason, 1988). The intention has been to treat the material heuristically, allowing meaning to "emerge and what comes out if it to just develop" (Etherington, 2004:217). In this way I have sought to understand Readers' stories, but in doing so as an insider researcher I have also gained a deeper understanding of myself (Moustakas, 1990:15). My own reflexive observations have become part of the story of the research, building on the emergent data and reflecting back on my own personal development and professional identity (Etherington, 2004:109). Much of this process has been recorded in my research journal. This is drawn upon where relevant alongside the analysis of the data gathered in the research settings. A detailed account of how the research was conducted follows in section 2 of the thesis.

Those who were to be interviewed were told that the data collected from the interviews would be taken back to them as many times as necessary for them to feel that their own voice was being represented in the final document. This leads to a consideration of ways of respecting the data and the research participants from an ethical perspective.

Ethical considerations

Ethical behaviour is about living a life which is virtuous through practising good traits, including honesty, truthfulness, courage, benevolence, being humble.

(Farrimond, 2013:16)

The desire to do no harm that has grown since my earlier experiences of potentially harmful research methods leads me to seek to engage in only robustly tested ethically sound research. I am acutely aware of the need for research design to exhibit "respect,

beneficence, non-maleficence and justice” (Farrimond, 2013:26-29). Being mindful of the feelings of those who take part in the research, ensuring that they benefit from, as well as giving to, the process, that they come to no harm as a result of the research method and that all participants are treated fairly and equally have been qualities that I have come back to time and again in my own reflections. I know that taking the stories that others share with me and interpreting those stories needs to be handled with great care. As Denzin points out, “writing is not an innocent practice” (2009:116). Through supervision and in my own constant checks on myself I have attempted to monitor my motives and act with integrity. There were a number of ethical issues that needed to be addressed in the design of this research.

Informed consent

The first issue involved obtaining consent from a number of quarters. Taking place in a diocese, I considered it to be necessary to seek the approval of the bishop to whom the Readers are licensed and are therefore ultimately in his care. This consent was given (appendix 4). Having gained his consent, and university ethical approval, information was given at the recruitment stage which enabled informed consent to be given in writing by all who chose to participate (appendix 5).

Even allowing for informed consent to have been given, it is always possible that asking people to consider their ministry from an existential point of view will raise awareness of otherwise unacknowledged questions, concerns or dis-ease. It was, therefore, necessary to provide interviewees with contact details of someone who would help them to think through these concerns in a confidential environment unrelated to the research project in any way. Careful consideration was given to the risks versus the benefits of this research. The risks were communicated, personally and in writing, to the potential participants. Great care was taken to ensure that participants were not coerced in any way. It is my belief, though, that the risk was minimal and that the research project could significantly improve the health of the Reader body as a whole.

Anonymity

Due to the group nature of part of the study, the small sample size and the interconnections between Readers in everyday life, it was not possible to guarantee total anonymity. Pseudonyms will, though, allow any dissemination of the data to be anonymous. Participants, and I include myself, chose the name by which they are to be known in all reports of the research. There was also a need to obtain consent for findings to be offered for publication, meaning that participants needed to be sufficiently confident that they will not be recognisable in any published work. They will, therefore, have the power to veto anything that they feel undermines their anonymity. A chapter in the book *Instruments of Christ's Love* (Tovey et al., 2016) has included some of the

data. A draft of the chapter was sent to all concerned and further permission gained for their words to be included. No-one expressed any concern at that stage, which was more than a year after the end of the group work and interviews were completed. This suggests to me that they had not had cause to reflect on the method of establishing anonymity with any level of concern.

Data storage

All records have been kept in a lockable filing cabinet and/or a computer with password protection in line with data protection guidelines. It was agreed with participants that these records would be kept for five years after publication of the doctorate to allow for possible ongoing research to make use of the data.

Power

A significant issue for me is that of power. I teach Readers and am perceived as a 'senior' Reader in the diocese. I am also aware of considerable good will from Reader colleagues which could create a desire to please me or to get the research 'right' on my behalf. Establishing boundaries and creating a co-researcher relationship from the outset was essential. Conversations since the data collection phase of the research indicate that this was sufficient to gain the trust of the participants and to enable co-researcher identity to develop.

Creativity

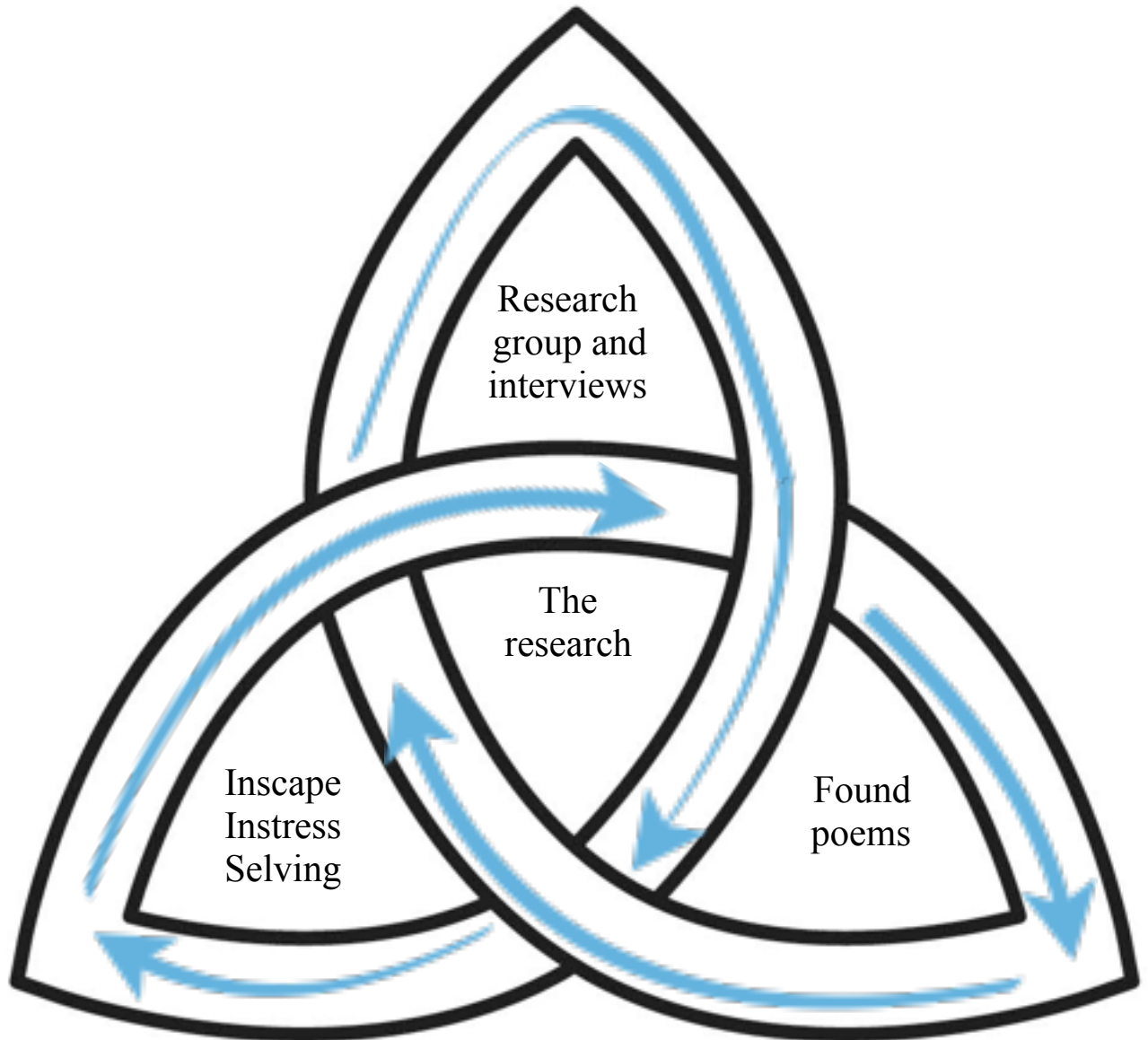
Whilst maintaining a strong ethical ethos, I do also desire to conduct research that will have the potential not only for data collection for my own use, but also enlightenment and empowerment of those who take part, giving voice to those whose stories are seldom shared and even when they are shared are often perceived as not being heard or understood. The moment in the wildlife garden that led to the writing of the poem quoted at the beginning of this chapter helped me to realise that if this gathering of information is to allow for any level of creative interaction with Readers I cannot eliminate every potential risk. If I am to gather qualitatively rich data which will allow for flourishing and flowering of those who take part I need to allow others' stories to have a life of their own. At one stage my 'ethical hypersensitivity' (Farrimond, 2013:89) was threatening to strangle not only my own freedom to gather and interpret information, but also to restrict those telling their stories to such an extent that their participation would be risk-free but potentially meaningless. The weeds and the brambles told me that gathering and interpreting qualitative data could not always be guaranteed to be a clean, sting-free activity. The ethical considerations put in place have, however, been established with care and participant feedback suggests that they were sufficient.

Reflexivity

One of the measures that allows for constant checks on the ethical nature as well as all other levels of care needed within the process of the research, its design, reporting and interpretation, is that of reflexivity. Reflexivity has been described as “explicit, self-aware reflection and analysis toward increasing richness and integrity of understanding” (Finlay, 2012:317).

My first encounter with the concept of reflexive research was when I studied for a masters degree in 2007. Working at that time with material relating to my own work and that of a colleague as we helped women in prison to express themselves in creative writing and counselling sessions, I became aware that my own story could not be left on one side. I was influencing the data that I was collecting simply by being involved in the research as one of the practitioners. Constantly examining my own role, feelings, thoughts and contributions to interviews and conversations did enrich the integrity and the understanding of that small-scale research project. It is important to me that this current research project has also espoused the values inherent in reflexive research of self-examination and honesty. At times that has led to an overthinking of a situation or to a loss of confidence on my part as I have been aware of my own potential to adversely, or just strongly, influence the data. It has, though, resulted in a research project that has not only discovered information, but has led to personal growth and awareness in many unexpected ways. Each section of the thesis contains a reflexive response. By being embedded in the thesis in this way, the concept of reflexivity will be developed and explained throughout. Suffice to say for now that by being aware of my influence on the research and the research's influence on me, this has become a “personal journey” in which I have allowed myself “to be known and seen by others” (Etherington, 2004:25). At times this has left me feeling uncomfortably vulnerable, but I can now say, as I come to the end of this research, that not only has the information contained found a level of integration but so have I as a practitioner, a researcher, a woman and a person of faith.

Section 2
Finding the Words



“Examining our speech may bring us to the point where we recognize that language cannot describe or contain the conditions of its own possibility - and that this incapacity is precisely the source of its energy, its movement, its capacity for correction, innovation and imagination.”

(Williams, 2014:172)

Collecting the data

The call for research participants was limited to Readers licensed by the bishop of the diocese in which I work. One reason for this choice was to allow the research to have local contextual significance independent of the thesis as a whole. Also, having been a Reader in this diocese for fourteen years allowed me to conduct this research as an insider researcher (Heron, 1996). Including participants from further afield would have had the potential to both compromise that role and complicate analysis of the findings due to the many variables in training, ministerial experience and ongoing ministerial education between dioceses. My aim was to gain the richest possible stories. At the same time, being an insider researcher/participant allowed my own experiences to influence, and be challenged by, the research process. In the spirit of the professional doctorate this seemed to be an important element to the overall research project.

Each participant, whether in the group or in face-to-face conversations, was contacted when they expressed an interest in participating in the research. As a way of ensuring that comparable data was being elicited from both group participants and interviewees everyone was sent a short piece of writing to act as a conversation starter (see appendix 6, page 222) The conversation starter contained a summary of theopoetics influenced by Wilder's thinking as a crafting of words which results in the shaping (poiein) of an experience of the divine (theo) (Wilder, 2001). This short piece also included an explanation of the motivation for the research. The participatory research took place over the summer of 2014 with just one interview conducted in December 2014. The number of participants was small; just four members of the co-operative inquiry group, including me, and five interviewees. Consideration was given to whether this was problematic, but for the reasons stated earlier in this chapter it was decided that the small, self-selected group gave internal validity which would have been compromised if any perceived pressure had been applied with a further call for participants (Swinton and Mowat, 2006:241).

The **co-operative inquiry group** met on five occasions with about four weeks between each meeting. At the first meeting the group constructed a research proposal to be submitted to Anglia Ruskin University (see appendix 8, page 225). Meeting frequency was agreed and action/reflection methods were detailed. It was decided that the reflection would be based upon journal entries. The journaling would record observations of experiences of Reader ministry and would take place in the weeks between group meetings. The journaling was the action itself so that it need not be based on ministerial experiences during the action period, but could include memories, feelings and responses to past as well as present awareness of vocation and practice. The decision was made for data to be recorded in writing on a large piece of paper allowing each participant space to record themes, phrases and words that struck them as important as the reflection sessions progressed. At the end of each session the written record was to be examined and themes extracted; each participant identifying

the most significant theme emerging from the session and the next phase of journaling being based on those four themes. A sound recording was made of the sessions to allow reflection on the group processes. No limit was imposed on the number of meetings to be held. It was simply agreed that we would continue until we felt we had tapped all of the information that we were able to find within ourselves. At the fifth and final meeting there was a general sense that the group's participation in the research had run its course.

The depth of bonding that took place between group members from the very early stages of the process took me by surprise. The first session was powerful. The group was affirming its commitment to Reader ministry as well as to the research project. There was a palpable sense of excitement as group members shared thoughts and feelings.

The group process itself was empowering and lively. The first session was set aside for establishing the method of gathering data, analysing that data and writing a group research proposal for university approval. Having established that each member of the group would journal their observations, feelings and insights into their ministry and bring these journal records to the meetings a date for the next meeting was fixed. The second session was the first at which data was collected. Group members had been diligent in keeping journal records and a number of topics were discussed with all group members recording significant words or phrases on a large sheet of paper as the discussion progressed. The last fifteen minutes or so of the meeting was spent reading aloud these comments and identifying the most significant theme for each member of the group that had emerged from the noted topics. These four themes became the topics for journaling for the time between this and the next meeting. Each of the subsequent group sessions followed a very similar pattern. Members of the group shared some of the insights from their journals and from their ongoing reflection on the themes identified in the previous session. As sessions progressed, however, journal keeping was rather less detailed than at the beginning and reflections were based more on thoughts that group members had had than on diligently kept written records. The recording of thoughts on the sheets of paper also began in a more systematic way than it continued for all of the sessions. For the first three sessions, notes were identified by each member of the group using one colour for the whole session and recording their name on the sheet in the same colour. Coming to the sheets after the end of the sessions it became clear that this practice had not continued and it was impossible to identify the person making individual comments after week three. Having said that, however, group members were dedicated to the process, took shared leadership of the group seriously and all questioned, challenged and were inspired by one another. With hindsight, there are a number of criticisms to be made of the restrictions placed, albeit by omission rather than commission, on the data that was

available for analysis after the end of the group meetings. These are addressed in the critique of the research method.

Interviews were conducted in quiet places where private one-to-one conversations could be held. All interviews lasted about an hour. The interviews were recorded, fully transcribed and analysed according to the poetic analysis techniques outlined below. These interviews were then followed up with another recorded conversation to validate the interpretation of what had been said with the participant.

What is possible in practice – with the resources at one's disposal – will always have to temper what blue skies thinking about combined methods might suggest.

(Woodhead, 2011:5).

These words of warning proved significant. I have not combined methods that are quantitative and qualitative, but I have combined two qualitative methods. The aim of using both methods was to access information at depth but also to broaden the research cohort. Whilst it was my 'blue skies thinking' sense that the richest data would be accessed through the work of a research group, I was also aware that it would not be possible to expect many people to give the time and energy required for belonging to a group involving multiple cycles of reflection and action. My thinking had to be tempered by the realities of practice. The strengths and weaknesses of the methods in relation to this project will be assessed in greater detail in the critique of the method and the analysis. Suffice to say at this point that I was surprised by the depth of data obtained from the interviews and at the depth of relational worth of the co-operative research group.

At the end of the process I had more than five hours of transcribed interview material and four very large sheets of paper on which the discussion about four themes per meeting had been recorded. This was problematic. The group's records were fairly random and unconnected. There had been no way of recording body language, silences and re-visited topics. Some group members recorded large quantities of thoughts as the meetings progressed. One member wrote just one or two words but was probably the most verbal member. The themes that emerged were valuable, but the mode of recording the data did not allow for the same level of analysis of the content of the group meetings as did the word for word transcripts of the interviews. As a result the broader data from the groups was used to provide themes alongside which the detailed data from the interviews was considered.

In many ways the group's data recording and analysis had taken place as the cycles of action and reflection unfolded. The thematic analysis of each session by the whole group has enhanced the more creative and detailed analysis of the interviews as explained in the next chapter.

Meaning Making

the scholar dances

his struggles

his joys

fills space

intensely

immersed

inside

the shape

of art

/

the art

of shape

(extract from poem *the scholar dances*. Prendergast, 2009:1373)

Having gathered the data from groups and interviews, the stories needed to be allowed to agree or disagree with my own identification with the theopoetic understanding of crafting of word as one possible key to articulating the essence of ministry of word. It had felt important that the method of meaning-making was not pre-determined. In the spirit of Denzin and Lincoln's (2008:5) description of the researcher as "bricoleur or quilt-maker", in which "choices regarding which interpretive practices to employ are not necessarily made in advance", it was decided that the method of interpretation would be dictated by the data as it emerged. This decision was made so that the data, and not my motives for collecting it, would dictate the direction of the research findings and conclusions and would form the basis for any action to be taken. In many ways this method aligns my own research and writing with the concept of the minster of word as an artisan, in that the outcome of the research is seen as a crafted item made from the contributions of those who participate in the research in which might be found "the concepts, the vectors, the grid that would address my specific concerns, and make a new start possible" (Bois, 1983:27).

Returning to the sense of wanting to reduce as much risk as possible when dealing with the data I did, for a very short time, consider using a system of analysis that would bring an element of objectivity to the process. The computer programme NVivo was considered but quite quickly rejected. The idea that the software might open up "new ways of seeing ... data ... miss(ed) when managing the information without software" (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013:2) appealed. However, their statement that "the efficiencies afforded by software release some of the time used to simply 'manage'

data and allow an increased focus on ways of examining the meaning of what is recorded” (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013:2) made me question the usefulness of such software in a small-scale project whose aim was to consider in depth the meaning of what was recorded. Whilst it has been claimed that using such tools enhances the validity of data analysis (Welsh, 2002:3), the advantage is still seen as being most relevant to a large-scale project. There was not going to be a confusing amount of information which would need ‘managing’ and over reliance on the software might limit my own creative involvement with the information. This was not congruent with the aim of this whole research project and was therefore ruled out.

Of the many methods of coding and analysing qualitative data, it became apparent that there was a valuable corpus of work, particularly in social science research relating to a number of methods of **poetic analysis**.

Poetry’s strength lies in its capacity to awaken and transform the reader concerning subjects that may not have otherwise captured the imagination

(Hordyck et.al., 2014:205).

To date, there is little evidence that Reader ministry has captured the imagination of those writing about it. It has been my intention to give voice to those involved in this research in a way that captures the depth and variety of imaginative ways that this ministry is experienced and articulated.

Richardson considers poetic analysis to be one of the tools available to those setting out to analyse qualitative data, claiming

(a) that for some kinds of knowledge, poetic representation may be preferable to representation in prose, and (b) that poetic representation is a viable method for seeing beyond social scientific conventions and discursive practices, and therefore should be of interest to those concerned with epistemological issues and challenges

(Richardson, 2002:876).

Whilst this is not a piece of social science research a method that helps to see beyond conventions is invaluable in the pursuit of a new way of approaching understanding of, and formation for, a long-established ministry. Poetic representation of data can help to do this by adding energy, space and a way of knowing that extends beyond the mind to the body, honouring our bodily responses to rhythm, sensation and awareness (Richardson, 2002, Galvin and Todres, 2009, Stewart, 2010).

As a fragment of arts-based inquiry, I intend for (my poem *the scholar dances*) to reveal the sometimes hidden intersections between the scholarly and personal, often found in the overlapping landscapes of experience and memory (which also happens to be the landscape of poetry)

(Prendergast, 2009:1373 First brackets mine, second brackets original).

That link between the scholarly and the personal is what I hoped would be found in the landscape of the poetic analysis of the interviews in this project. Or conversely, it was my hope that in applying poetic analysis to personal stories they would forge a link between the tellers of the experiences and the scholar (in this case me) in a way that would allow the stories to find their own voice through mine. In doing so I believe I have brought to the field of practical theology not only new understanding of my subject, but that the style of presentation of that knowledge locates itself with, and offers some additional understanding to, the works of Slee (2004, 2007, 2011) and Walton (2011, 2013, 2014a, 2014b) which have had considerable influence on this thesis. Both express understanding and knowledge in a way that does not conform to the traditional divisions between creative and academic writing. I have sought to make connections and patterns through the practical use of language with all of the energy and potency that the poetic form gives to it (Richardson, 2002; Wakeham, 2015).

As stated in a previous chapter, my intention was for this work to be heuristic in nature and for the form of analysis to emerge along with the data. One particular poetic inquiry method did emerge as I was transcribing the recorded interviews. As I listened to the pauses as well as the words, and as I phrased the transcription around the interviewees intakes of breath, rhythms of speech and my own gut reactions to the words I was hearing, poems began to emerge. Following the thinking of May (1995) that “attending to what our bodies know, we may yet tell the truth of our lives” I developed this further by investigating the found poems method of analysis. In this approach words, sentences and sometimes whole phrases are taken from the participants’ own words and are reframed to create poems. The reframing is not a rewording but incorporates a way of listening not only to the words but to the pauses, the taking of breath, the repetition and the silence and presenting the participants’ own words in poetic form (Richardson, 2002, Butler-Kisber, 2010). In this way the method of analysis is wholly congruent with the research question in that it is exploring the possibility of a theopoetic paradigm by crafting and re-crafting understanding from the language provided in the data. It is also fully engaging with the way in which everyday ministerial experiences are communicated and by its very nature is subverting attempts to confine theology to thought processes.

Applying poetic principles therefore, I would claim, increased the integrity of the empirical research as part of the overall thesis.

Instead of writing or talking through abstract concepts *about* their research without ever immersing deeply in the culturally-constructed worlds of the people they study, as one might proceed in writing or applying scientific theory, poets write *in* and *with* the facts and frameworks of what they see in themselves *in relation to* Others, in particular landscapes, emotional and social situations.

(Brady, 2009: xiv italics in original text)

The creative poetic voice allows a third voice to be heard, that of the poem itself, which combines those of the researcher and the researched. Transparency in the process of analysis and finding that third voice is essential to ensure that the voices of participants are not re-presented selectively (Grbich, 2013:130). Acknowledging the potential for selective re-presentation as a possible negative aspect of poetic analysis, I would nevertheless argue that, for this project, the many strengths of that process dominate. Probably the greatest strength for me is the way in which poetic inquiry in phenomenological research allows for a time of “dwelling and holding so that meanings can form” giving rise to an “embodied interpretation” of stories (Galvin and Todres, 2009:312,313). Because “poetry believes in the body as an instrument of knowing, its rhythmic awareness and sensations a gift” (Stewart, 2010:91) poetic analysis of stories of vocation seemed to me to be a powerful gift. Not only did the words shared with me communicate significant levels of understanding but so did the participants’ patterns of breathing, hesitation, speed of words when excited or ponderous and so many ways in which the words were nuanced by the way they were embodied and the way in which my body responded to them as I listened and re-listened.

Using this approach has allowed me to highlight the voices of Readers themselves. In a comparative study of data analysis of group interviews in a qualitative research project it was found that “the found poems added an emotional depth and connection that was missing from the traditional approach of coding qualitative data” (Reilly, 2013:1). In addition Reilly concluded that

found poems functioning as member checks allow us as audience to more directly access the emotional life of the participants than more traditional analysis limits.... As well, the found poem was able to retain the voice of the participant in a more profound way than just communicating meaning.

(Reilly, 2013:12).

This has been backed up on numerous occasions by the reaction of participants to their own words in poetic form. Every participant was re-visited after the transcription

and the poems had been recorded. No-one asked for anything to be changed. Moreover, all participants said that they found their own words moving, informative and motivational.

The scholars quoted above argue for poetry and poetics to be among the tools available to researchers in social science subjects. I would argue that with much of the core Christian text, the Bible, written in poetic form, this argument can be extended to the realms of practical theology. In my search for a deeper understanding of what Readers consider to be their vocation, their motivation and their experience of words which transcend the mundane, I have attempted to find ways of expressing some almost inexpressible concepts. I have needed all the tools I could lay my hands on. As Brady says “poetry can catch us in the act of *being*. What could be more fundamental to knowing the human condition than that?” (2009: xvi). This process is exposing of both the researcher and participants. It is also demanding creatively, emotionally and in time and energy of the researcher. It seems, though, to be the only process that has the integrity to hold this whole research project together.

Expectations

The genesis of this research is located in my own personal experience and understanding. Before I conducted the interviews and took part in the co-operative inquiry group I had no real idea what to expect of the findings. I was unsure that others would share my experience and fully expected to spend time critiquing my own position in the light of contradictory experiences. The level of agreement that emerged took me by surprise. The ideas shared deepened and developed my understanding beyond my expectation.

I was aware that, even as a co-researcher and co-participant, I was in a position of power. My intention was to minimise this power imbalance by formulating no expectations of findings, not engaging with any possible literature that would help me to express the findings until I had collected all of my data and by being careful not to steer conversations in ways that elicited data that agreed with my own position. I worried that my data might reflect little more than what people thought I wanted them to say. I was concerned that I might manipulate others’ stories inadvertently by focusing on what I hoped to hear and missing crucial contradictory stories. I made sure that I had no framework into which to fit the findings so that the findings could form the framework that grew out of the research. Within reflexive research, these are feelings that “we have to contain... rather than deny, suppress, or rationalise” (Josselson, 1996:70). By paying attention to them I was more confident that what I found in the data emerged from the combined stories and not from my preconceived ideas. In truth my expectations of this stage of the research were not high. I was rewarded with, and humbled by, rich, significant data shared with generosity and openness.

Grouping the initial findings

After the first stage of the analysis had taken place, the finding of the poems and producing them in written form, I pondered the data for a long time (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). Reading and re-reading the poems I attempted to find a way to group the information that had emerged. After a number of readings and groupings I realised that the data was gathering into three themes. These themes could have been given a number of titles, but it became apparent that they could be framed in terms of Gerard Manley Hopkins' concepts of inscape, instress and selving. I was as careful as I could be not to impose this framework on the data, but once the emerging topics became apparent, gathering them into poetically inspired themes with reference to the Hopkins material that had inspired much of this work became my chosen way to continue to work with the data.

The next section of the thesis will examine in detail the way in which the concepts of inscape, instress and selving might be applied to the findings. It will also consider the practical application of the findings to the teaching of formation and ongoing ministerial education for Readers in training and ministry. Simply recording here that the concepts' definitions have been re-worked is intended to lead the way to the poetic material, the relevant literature and the implications for my professional practice. The first chapter examining these reframed definitions includes material relating to inner landscape; the common features of personality, skills and character that lead to a sense of vocation to ministry of word. The second is framed as relational landscape and considers the way Readers speak about the crafting of words in order that The Word of God might be communicated. The third considers the unique expression that each person has of their vocation to this ministry. The findings in these categories will be brought into conversation with scholars from disciplines outside of pastoral theology. These conversations have been guided by the emerging data and have held an element of surprise as the thesis has progressed.

Reflexive response and critique

Of the method.

During the research design stage of this project I was concerned about the potential for co-operative inquiry's wide-ranging acceptance of methods to lead to a watering down of the research's validity. I wrote that I saw my own counselling training with the skills of listening, reflecting, challenging and focusing on the heart of a situation as being likely to provide significant checks and balances which would prevent the group becoming a point of meeting of like-minded people which could become an arena in which pre-existing opinions would be affirmed. I envisaged my place in the research as safeguarding against the potential to drift from the point and to gather data of great breadth but little depth. I revisit this idea now with a sense of embarrassment and an

acknowledgment of my own arrogance. My intention was to internally initiate this research. As a Reader I was to be a co-researcher and co-participant in the project (Heron, 1996:40). And yet I thought that I would be the one holding the integrity of the project. I realise now that these two concepts are contradictory. In the event other members of the group were probably more careful than I was to hold us all to task, to challenge pre-conceived ideas and to bring us back to the topic being discussed. Listening again to the recordings of our group meetings, I hear each member of the group at different times fulfilling this monitoring role with ease and considerable skill; evidence that we were all co-operatively fulfilling researcher and participant roles. My desire to be an insider researcher in the purest sense of the word succeeded more by serendipity than expertise. The timing of the research allowed me to work with Reader colleagues. I had been a Reader in the diocese for twelve years when I called for volunteers to take part in a co-operative inquiry group. Just as the final cycle of reflection and action was drawing to a close I became Warden of Readers. This new role changed my relationship with the members of the group in a way that would have made the research method impossible. The power that is intrinsic in this new role could, potentially, have destroyed the validity of the research. "Participatory research has as its goal the structural transformation for the benefit of the less powerful" (Farrimond, 2013:17). As a member of the powerful structure of the diocese to which all Reader ministry is accountable, it would have been very difficult for me to be an insider researcher/participant. I am aware of the influence that this change of role has had on my thinking processes as I write up this research. My professional involvement with Readers now extends beyond initial training. The findings of the research are already proving valuable in the ongoing ministerial education and formation of experienced Readers. The initial investigation remains valid. The developed framework relates to initial ministerial education. The influence, though, is now more significant and wide-reaching.

It was my desire to conduct what I considered to be a 'pure' form of co-operative research, putting myself into the role of co-participant as well as others in the roles of co-researcher (Heron, 1996). I was resistant to the Theological Action Research model of insider and outsider researchers (Cameron et al., 2010). My resistance was based on my concerns about power imbalance and the potential for me to steer the research findings by being perceived as holding the expert voice. The process of co-operative cycles of action and reflection was as true to the original concept as possible. Its impact on those who took part, as they reported it in conversations almost a year later, was significant and contained elements of liberation and healing; stories were heard and honoured and new understandings of the calling to lay ministry of word found. However, I have become aware that this method has at times compromised the qualitative depth of data as a result of my reluctance to interpret or guide conversation in any way. I am also now conscious that the mere act of calling for research participants put me in the position of expert outsider. The data is not negated by these

compromises, and neither is the research method. This method of inquiry has, however, proved to be limited in its contribution to the findings in this research for a number of reasons. The decision that was made in the first session to gather data from journal entries, but not to include the written journal material as data respected the confidentiality of the participants and was intended to encourage openness and honesty in the writing of the entries. However, this decision also severely limited the quality of the data available for analysis. Placing analysis of the data into themes into the group process as it happened enabled the reflection/action stages of the group process to progress effectively. However, it also resulted in a more limited data bank for later analysis. In addition, due to the lack of consistency of group members to record data as discussions progressed, even if the agreed methods of data collection and analysis had not been limiting the quality of recorded data would have been problematic. It is my opinion now that if I was to repeat a similar project in future I would be more open to employing Theological Action Research methods with their increased level of transparency on the subject of power and ownership and the possibility that they would provide more usable data. Had the research not been a fully inclusive cooperative process, I would have been able to use my own data from journal records and would have had more freedom to direct the group in deciding how to interpret and analyse the data and in considering greater access to journal records and the use of the recordings of the sessions as part of my research project beyond the group process. At the time of the group meetings the process seemed to be producing valuable data. For the purposes of a small scale local research project I still believe that this was the case and would use this method again. However, when I came to analyse the data from both groups and interviews, it became apparent that by insisting on such a form of cooperative research I had limited the possible levels of ongoing analysis of the data. I had also limited the way in which I could reference my own data in the form of my journal entries and my own contributions to the group discussion. To have treated my own data differently from that of other group members would have been to take myself out of full membership of the group and to preference my own data. Had the research been intentionally autoethnographic, this would have been an acceptable practice. To do so, however, I would have needed to make clear to the whole group that this was the intention from the beginning of the research. Being a member of the group does mean that my subsequent interpretation of the data from the interviews, as well as my understanding of the work involved in establishing the themes by the group, has been influenced by the discussions and the group dynamic. Although the details of the journal entries and conversations were not available for further analysis, they have informed my own further research. What I had not recognised at the beginning of the research was that while the whole group could own the short term research project, it could not own the whole thesis. I had not given myself any ownership of the data beyond the time of the group action and reflection cycles. The themes that had emerged were of great value. However, without the addition of the

interviews my data pool would have been severely restricted, even though the group process was significant for all who participated.

Of the analysis.

Significant philosophical changes have taken place in qualitative research in the past few years; changes “which question the fundamental underlying assumptions of the gold standard of trustworthiness and therefore, the utility of member checks” (Reilly 2013:2). Discovering that researchers in the social sciences have been engaging in poetic analysis of data with the intention of inviting new ways of knowing, evoking a response of the intellect, the emotions and the spirit for the past twenty years (Leggo, 2008:166) was a revelation. My intention had always been to gain participants’ reactions to the data collected and my interpretation of it. This different way of knowing opened up a different way of operating member checks of the data collected. Using a poetic form of analysis helped me to very quickly access the meaning behind the words as I transcribed the interviews. The powerful reactions from participants when I re-visited to make sure I had heard them correctly surprised me. I found that this way of experiencing their own words was received as not only honouring what they had said but illuminating and deepening their own thoughts and perceptions. In the past when I have interpreted transcribed data in a prosaic way participants have either agreed with my interpretation or elaborated upon it in order to clarify points. In this research, every participant exhibited an emotional response to the data in poetic form. What they were responding to, for the most part, was their own words distilled and honed but mostly unchanged. Every one of those who had been interviewed expressed surprise that they had said such significant things. They also reported a sense of increased purpose as a result of reading their own words in poetic form. What I found in poetic analysis was an energising, authentic way of expressing stories that had been shared with me.

The performative sensibility turns interviews into performance texts, into poetic monologues. It turns interviewees into performers, into persons whose words and narratives are then performed by others.

(Denzin, 2009:217).

Ideally this stage of the work would be performative. This has been possible to some extent in presentations made about the work, but not yet as fully as I would have liked due to the need to communicate the findings of this research for assessment. It is my intention to use the findings and the ‘poems’ in a more performative way in the future in my own teaching and presentations to Reader groups.

Poetic analysis and pastoral theology

A number of researchers in the field of social sciences have argued for methods of analysis that allow the data to touch hearts as well as minds, to penetrate depths of lived experience and to connect the audience emotionally as well as intellectually with the research participants (Clough, 2002, Butler-Kisber, 2010, Reilly, 2013). If the credibility of research in practical theology “emerges from the richness of the research data and its ability to resonate with others” (Swinton and Mowat, 2006:122) I would argue that this form of analysis is well suited to the discipline. If pastoral theology aims to offer a “place where contemporary experience and the resources of the religious tradition meet in a critical dialogue that is mutually and practically transforming” (Pattison and Woodward, 1994), the more methods that can be employed to enable that critical dialogue to take place, the more comprehensive will be the scope of the conversation. Incorporating all that poetic inquiry has to offer into pastoral theology research offers a way of expressing embodied knowing. This expression will not be about “incorporation and harmony” but will be interested in “sharing in the passion, the wounding and the glory of this living. The everyday life. This living God” (Walton, 2014b:185). In its emphasis on the nature of theopoetics in ministry as well as in research, this thesis contributes to this developing corpus of work.

Conclusions

The research group was liberative, established a sense of ownership, has resulted in at least one ongoing relationship of support and encouragement and one person from the group has become directly involved in Reader training as a result of her engagement with the research project. However, due to the constraints placed on my access to the data because of the method of data collection and analysis agreed at the beginning of the project, it was not possible for what could have been rich and deep data to be accessed and analysed in the same detail as that gained by the interview process. With one-to-one interviews there was less negotiation, more privacy, less compromise for the pastoral needs of group members. The interviews resulted in more efficiently accessed, rich, personal stories being shared.

As a research tool for gathering information, in the future I would choose to interview people, conversationally and co-operatively, offering the opportunity for reflection and action as part of the process. As a research tool to begin a piece of work that is planned to inform, change and enable local responses in either mission or ministry I would argue for either establishing a co-operative research group (Heron, 1996) or engaging in a Theological Action Research project (Cameron et.al. 2010). Either of these methods, handed over to local participant researchers at the point where the research findings are gathered and ongoing action is needed is, I would suggest, capable of creating the conditions for sustainable and critically reflective projects.

Using combined qualitative methods has, I would argue, enriched the data. The experience of working with the complexities in design, information gathering and analysis has been valuable. Whilst the group data may not feature in the same detail as that gathered in interviews, the themes arrived at through cycles of reflection and action offer a number of valuable categories which have framed the more detailed words of the found poems that emerged from within the interview transcripts.

Stanzas

Introduction

This research is both ontological; exploring “the nature of being” (Concise Oxford Dictionary) and existential; relating to the way in which that human being experiences all that “relates to existence” (Concise Oxford Dictionary). As such it seeks to challenge the polarisation of these terms in some theological writings. Allowing for researchers’ expressions of the nature of being and the experience of living as Readers it was decided to carry out a thematic analysis based primarily on the data rather than on my own prior reading and expectations. Themes may be

imposed by you derived from previous relevant literature, which you have reviewed, from evidence within the area being studied or from your gut feelings as well as from the views of those being observed or interviewed. However, despite the temptation for researchers to impose labels early in the process, qualitative research insists that the data should speak for itself initially before researcher-designer labels are over-imposed. (Grbich, 2013:62).

Having been personally influenced by the work of Hopkins, I was determined to avoid imposing my own researcher-designer labels on the basis of an assumption that his concepts would inform the results as well as the genesis of this research. However, the links kept leaping out of the page in the found poems. I was consistently sorting stanzas of poems into three groups. On careful consideration, gazing at the emerging themes and allowing them to speak for themselves (Heron, 1996), allowing the data to speak for itself (Grbich, 2013:62), it became apparent that these groupings fell broadly into Hopkins’ categories of inscape, instress and selving. The presentation of the data in this section and the interpretation and practical response to the findings in section 3 re-work Hopkins’ concepts and develop them and their application to ministry.

In this chapter I present these findings in the form of iterative stanzas. In the way that a poem’s stanzas have a rhythm and a pattern, each of this chapter’s ‘stanzas’ has a repeating pattern. While the term stanza cannot be applied in a pure sense as there are no “groups of rhymed lines occurring as a repeated metrical unit” (Concise Oxford Dictionary), the etymology of the word allows for the fact that a stanza is a place to stop, to stay. Within the framework of the thesis, it is at this point that the work stops, stays for a while with the collected data, finds a stillness within new concepts and then moves on in section 3 to the outworking of this iterative process. It is this stopping and the rhythm, if not a rhyming scheme, of the sections of this chapter upon which I am basing the concept that they are stanzas in their own right. Each of the stanzas concentrates on one of Hopkins’ themes but these themes cannot be totally separated, hence the iterative process of visiting and re-visiting patterns and themes as the

chapter progresses. In many ways this continues the action/reflection/action cycle of the co-operative research process (Heron, 1996). By working with the material in this way I have paid attention to all of the data and related what has been shared with me directly to my own understanding of ministry of word and my professional practice. I consider the framework offered by the concepts of inscape, instress and selving in order. In each case the term is given a working definition which relates it to the findings. The relevant research findings are then communicated and further literature examined in order that the emerging themes are developed and related to the research question. Each stanza concludes with a reflexive response, allowing me to relate the findings to my own story and my work and then each stanza is critiqued. This chapter is intentionally reporting the findings and developing the ideas that emerged during the participatory research phase of this work. Development and interpretation of the themes takes place in conversation with academic texts. It does not seek to bring the findings back into conversation with the research question. Neither is there any intention to give consideration to how the work might influence Reader training and ministerial development. These issues are considered in detail, along with greater emphasis on my own interpretation of the data, in section 3 which examines ways in which the concepts might become performative in nature.

Stanza one considers the research data relating to instress. As will be explained in more detail in the stanza itself, this is the material that relates to participants' understanding of their identity and its significance to Reader ministry. The material is necessarily introspective. As such participants had less to say about this than other aspects of their ministry, but what they did say is significant; particularly in the common themes that emerged. This stanza therefore contains a small amount of research data which is then considered thematically in the light of a significant amount of further engagement with scholarly texts.

Stanza two, on the other hand, relates to the crafting of words identified by participants as the main thrust of their ministry, whether in church in teaching and preaching roles or in work and community in ministry of word in its broadest sense. This stanza therefore relates more information gathered through the research process and brings it into conversation with just a few scholars' voices; particularly those writing about homiletics. This material relates to Hopkins' concept of instress; the interpersonal space in which the creator is recognised.

Stanza three considers the data relating to very personal expressions of how Reader ministry is lived out in each of the participants' lives, relating to Hopkins' concept of selving. While it would have been possible to consider each of the expressions in detail, to do so without follow-up interviews would have involved significant interpretation of the meaning behind the participants' statements. Further data collection was not considered appropriate as participants' lives have changed and

moved on and my own role in relation to others in the research has changed leading to a power imbalance. While it would be extremely interesting to work in this way the method and amount of new information gathered would constitute a whole new research project.

As a result, the information that is related to further reading in stanza three is my own story. The process of carrying out this research has had a considerable impact on my own understanding of my calling, my voice and my particular vocation. It is this material that is interpreted and developed enabling the words of the other participants to stand. I do want to acknowledge here though that there would be scope for further research involving deeper consideration of the data presented in this stanza, further reading and additional interviews with participants to validate the interpretation and enrich the data.

The research findings are intentionally not presented in a stand-alone way. The found poems are interwoven with the further reading and exploration of the topics that they generated. The work has been presented in this way so that literature enabling the development of topics is related directly to the research participants' contributions to this work. The initial literature presented in previous chapters formed a back-bone for the research proposal. The literature presented in the stanzas that follow is that which relates directly to the research findings. Further literature is also presented as part of section 3 when I interpret the findings and consider the research's contribution to theological understanding, research methods and practice.

Stanza 1 - Inscape

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed.

(Hopkins: God's Grandeur)

Reframing the term

'In-scape' is the outward reflection of the *inner* nature of a thing, or a sensible copy or representation of its individual essence; and thus I define it as the unified complex of those sensible qualities of an object that strike us as inseparably belonging to and most typical of that object, so that through the knowledge of this unified complex of sense-data we may gain an insight into the individual essence of the object.

(Peters, 1948:2)

Peters' rather complex definition of inscape is illuminated for me by the words of Pick who, when speaking of inscape, refers to the "ontological secret" of an objects innermost being (Pick, 1942:33). While rather more prosaic, Ballinger's explanation of inscape as being "the objective reality that exists independent of the beholder" (Ballinger 2000:133) also illuminates Peters' definition. Inscape is not something that is experienced relationally. Inscape exists whether or not there is anyone to observe it. The inscape of an object is its very essence. To Hopkins, this essence is the nature of the maker. All the world, everything created, is "charged with the grandeur of God"

My reading of the extract from the poem *God's Grandeur* above leads me to understand inscape to be not only an "objective reality" (Ballinger, 2000:133) but a powerful force existing in all of the created world. This reality is "charged" like electricity and oozes "like oil crushed". Inscape, then, speaks of the internal make-up of the created thing. It is that which can be seen by others but which is not dependent upon the presence of others for its existence.

I do not think I have ever seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of our Lord by it. Its inscape is mixed of strength and grace.

(Hopkins, 1870 in House, 1959:199)

It is, I recognise, rather more problematic to say that what makes me who I am exists independent of a beholder than it is to say this of a bluebell. Since “no man (sic.) is an island” (Donne, 1624) there is a sense of interconnection between human beings that maybe, rightly or wrongly, we do not routinely recognise in objects or plants.

I am not, however, alone in believing that the concept of inscape can be related to human beings’ “ontological secrets” just as successfully as it can to the internal landscapes of elements in the natural world. Gardner (1953:51) speaks of the poet’s own nature (his own inscape) thus affirming that not only do created things, but also created beings, have inscape. Buechner argues that “in the case of human beings (Hopkins) believed (inscape) to be their deeply buried likeness to Christ” (Buechner, 2001:32). Cooper (2005:127) points out that Thomas Merton was influenced throughout his life and work by Hopkins.

Through his life-long love affair with nature and his keen awareness of how its inscaped landscapes shaped his spiritual landscape, to every time, like a kingfisher, he caught fire, drew flame, and flung out the truth of his name, the Hopkinsian spirit was an on-going force awakening him to his deepest Self (Cooper, 2005:127).

Merton’s idea that his deepest Self, his inscaped being, could be awakened and recognised in this way is highlighted in Cooper’s interpretation of Merton’s thoughts:

Merton himself gave voice to this dynamic process ... while reflecting on nature in *New Seeds of Contemplation*. In the chapter entitled, “Things in Their Identity,” he comments that for animals, “Their inscape is their sanctity. It is the imprint of [God’s] wisdom and of [God’s] reality in them.” And he fleshes this out further in one of his journal entries written on Holy Saturday, April 5, 1958, just after a wren had landed on his shoulder: “I want not only to observe but to know living things, and this implies a dimension of primordial familiarity which is simple and primitive and religious and poor. This is the reality I need, the vestige of God in His creatures. And the Light of God in my own soul.” (Cooper, 2005:130)

This is not found easily by Merton. His sense is that “unlike the animals and the trees, it is not enough for us to be what our nature intends... For us, holiness is more than humanity... God leaves us free to be whatever we like” (Merton, 1962:31). Whilst essence or inscape, Merton argues, is given to plants and animals, as humans we have to seek God and allow God to work with us in order that we might develop an understanding of our true self. “If I find him I will find myself, and if I find my true self I will find him” (Merton, 1962:34). Acknowledging this complexity is enlightening when

considering the concept of inscape in relation to human beings. If our true self has to be discovered, as opposed to simply being observed, it is necessary to allow time and to engage in honest reflection with others as well as times of prayer and contemplation in the company of God alone. It is these qualities that have informed the way in which the concept of inscape has been considered in further thinking about the information shared by Readers as part of this research. Inscape allows for examination of those aspects of vocation that are integral to the person who recognises, owns and articulates them. What became apparent in the analysis of the data was that there were some identifying features of individual ministry which were about the way the ministry is practised. They were the outworking of the person's sense of calling which was unique to them. They were not, however, those deep down "ontological secrets" to which Pick refers (1942:33). These factors are considered in the third stanza of this chapter with the help of the concept of selving. However, when examining the research data, time and time again I came across expressions of 'being' that were shared by a number of the research participants but related to inner qualities rather than learned skills or an externalised sense of identity. I would argue that these qualities, which are examined in some detail in this stanza, are congruent with Hopkins' concept of inscape.

For the purposes of this research, I am therefore defining inscape as **inner landscape**. Not only the inner landscape investigated by many forms of psychological profiling, but that which is "charged with the grandeur of God" (Hopkins) and therefore speaks of an incarnational theology of ministry of word which will be examined in more detail as this stanza progresses by considering what Readers have shared with me of the essential qualities of the sense of vocation to this ministry. These are the qualities that develop Hopkins' concept of inscape in that it is that which is "inseparably belonging to and most typical of" (Peters 1948:2) a made object or something of nature. The qualities being considered are those which are inseparable and most typical of those who identify as having a calling to Reader ministry.

Research findings

As previously stated, there was not the same amount of data relating to inscape as to the concepts of instress and selving. However, the ideas shared and depth of importance conveyed overrides the volume of words used. These ideas are, by definition, internal and communicated with the outside world through instress. By taking time to observe each of the offerings, though, it has been possible to develop an understanding of what the participants in this research hold in common in their instressed nature.

Co-operative Research Group

A number of themes emerged from the group's cycles of action and reflection which led me to begin to consider the formulation of this framework based on Hopkins' concepts of inscape, instress and selving. Those that relate to the definition of inscape as inner landscape (in Hopkins' words, "charged with the grandeur of God") were debated and a feeling emerged that all members of the group could share to greater or lesser degrees something of the meaning of these qualities.

The first discussion led to an articulation of a sense of excitement about the vocation to Reader ministry. This was not an historical excitement, but an ongoing sense that the members of the group were called to a particular way of being and were continually learning more about this vocation. Exploring the themes of **vocation** and **calling** in greater detail and seeking to understand where this excitement was located through cycles of action and reflection led to expression and exploration of the themes of **being**, **essence** and **layness**. The common sense that words had always been important and were essential to the understanding of vocation was also articulated.

These themes of vocation, calling, being, essence and layness were not limited to the group discussions. Many of the elements of the found poems reflect, and build on, these themes. The group themes and some of the expressions in poetic form will be the basis for exploration of further literature below. First, here are some of the words shared by interviewees:

A sense that her ministry is about **being** is expressed by Ruth:

What I do
is who I am
as a Christian

Relating to the sense of **vocation**, Leo Hines says of ministry

Not a job
A vocation
to break open the word
The word that is
as Christ was The Word

Speaking of himself, John says

all that you are
is about the word of God

Layness, whilst expressed in terms of where it enables Ruth to live out her ministry, is clearly experienced as being the essence of her vocation when she says

Layness
puts me in there
with all

that is nitty
and gritty

Monica considers herself to have a

Specific lay ministry
Of word

Words are important. It is in what participants say about themselves and their relationship with words that the sense of self-identification as craftspeople begins to emerge. Whilst the outworking of this awareness will be considered in much greater detail in the next stanza on instress it is important to draw attention to the consistency with which the sense that the essence of those who took part could be expressed at least in part as someone whose life has contained a sense of being a crafter of words or a wordsmith:

The process of distilling
is important
Whisky is distilled
Water is distilled
Thoughts distilled
and words given life

A wordsmith
Ready
Prepared
Inspired
(Leo Hines)

My craft
is words
(Ruth)

For John, the sense of **vocation** and **being** called to work with words has always been part of his self-understanding.

background in word
as first vocation

I took that for granted

spinning together of ideas
crafting words

Marilyn's ministry is expressed in ways that relate to the more relational space of instress but there is significant reference to the lay nature of that ministry and to the fact that as a lay preacher there is time for

Mulling and sifting -
The craft of the wordsmith

All of these expressions lead me to explore further literature that might illuminate or challenge these concepts.

Further literature

Being/Essence

This is probably the most complex of the emerging themes and the one that underpins all other expressions of identity. I will therefore attempt to consider epistemological material as well as theological and psychosocial insights from the vast corpus of literature that could be engaged with.

A number of participants used the words 'essence' or 'essential' when referring to their identity as Readers and ministers of word.

Heidegger's understanding of essence is described as that which is

synonymous with the 'being-ness of a being,' conceived as what is constantly present and unhidden, i.e. what constantly shows itself, affording a look (eidos) of itself and enabling a representation of perception of it. Alternatively, the essence is what something truly is, what it is in truth (Dahlstrom, 2013:86).

The 'being-ness of a being' sounds very like inscape. If this is the case, the fact that to Heidegger "the essence of truth and the truth of essence are ... constantly unfolding. They are not fixed" (Dahlstrom, 2013: 67) establishes the idea that inscape may also be unfixed, constantly unfolding as we "work together with God in the creation of our own life" (Merton, 1962:32). This is unlike, and challenging to, the understanding of essence in Platonic thought which is of something that is "unchanging" (Silverman, 2002:80). That which identifies what Plato names "pure Form" describes its "itness" (Silverman, 2002:7). This cannot change. While this Platonic definition sounds initially very like Hopkins' concept of inscape, it does not allow for the unfolding of inscape described by Hopkins as oozing "like oil crushed" (Hopkins: God's Grandeur) or Merton's sense of a "force awakening him to his deepest Self" (Cooper, 2005:127). Heidegger does not see these awakenings or changes as dramatic or obvious, but comprehends that our "understanding of what is-ness is changes so slowly that human beings hardly notice the change" (Thomson, 2011:109). This has implications for initial and ongoing formation as learning will be slow and probably life-long leading to an unfolding understanding of vocation and ministry in relation to being rather than a sudden revelation. The practical implications of this slow unfolding will be considered in section 3 of the thesis.

Moreover, and in a further move away from the work of Plato but in line with Hopkins' concepts and the poetic nature of this research, Heidegger states his belief that the way that we use words in everyday life is generally about information-giving. Once we wish to access that which is deeper than this everyday use of language he says we are using language which is poetic (Heidegger, 1975). This is in direct contrast to Plato,

who believed poetry to be “a deception [which] proffers imitations of imitations when life's purpose is to seek eternal absolute truth ... [and] stirs up refractory emotions, challenging reason's rule” (Edmundson, 1995:1). To Heidegger, “poetic language is inseparable from his understanding of being” (Mitchell, 2011: 231).

For Ricoeur, writing only slightly later than Heidegger, understanding of selfhood is predicated on linguistic consciousness. Like Kristeva, Ricoeur believes that experience comes before language and “experience rather than being produced by language, is given configuration by language” (Venema, 2000:34). Ricoeur's understanding of identity is, in part, expressed in terms of the use of metaphor and poetic narrative forms. Venema asserts that

in particular, the extended metaphor or narrative has the capacity to bring to light the temporal process of identity formation. Narrative, like all creative discourse, is supposed to bring experience to language, but the particular experience that corresponds to the narrative form is the world of human temporality and action, that is, the world that subjects agents to change and is subjected to change by agents in search of their identity (2000:93)

Ricoeur's theories of narrative understanding of selfhood allow for the possibility that there is something deep down in each of us that is formed before we have linguistic skills and it is that which we communicate through our narrative self-making in relation to others. Whilst we may need, as humans, to be in relationships to fully develop an understanding of what it is that makes us who we are, Ricoeur himself says “it is the limited character of self-knowledge which imposes the indirect strategy of interpretation” (Ricoeur, 1971:xvi). In addition, Sheldrake says that “narrative is a critical key to our identity, for we all need a story to live by in order to make sense of the otherwise unrelated events of life and to find a sense of dignity” (Sheldrake, 2001:19).

It is impossible to know whether people who do not develop the ability to communicate in this way have a sense of self that equates with the sense of self that is communicated by those with well developed language skills. I am not willing, though, to say that anyone without the ability to externalise this understanding does not have a sense of self. Observations of babies suggest that they have distinct personalities from birth. Babies who learn sign language show that they have the ability to communicate before they have the physical development that allows them to do so through speech. While the long term linguistic benefits of baby signing are in doubt (Seal and DePaolis, 2014:445), this isolated study of the scientific evidence available for or against baby signing was retrospective and so could not consider the short term benefits of lowering frustration levels for babies who had the desire, but not the physical ability to communicate needs and desires. There is anecdotal evidence that signing allows pre-

verbal children to “tell us about their.... thoughts and feelings” (Doherty-Sneddon, 2016) suggesting that our sense of self begins before we are able to express ourselves through verbal narratives. I realise I am making assumptions but I do not feel able to totally align myself with those who say that our sense of identity is dependent on narrative and spoken language skills. Whether, in fact, narrative allows us to develop our essential nature or whether it is language which accesses that which has always been and allows us to more fully understand that essence and communicate it to others, I believe that, in the words of Heidegger, “the activity of logos [disclosedness, not language] is what allows man (sic.) to actively disclose existence” (Pell, 2012:11 - brackets mine). In the stanza that follows and in section 3 of this thesis there is an examination of the way in which language skills might be developed to better enable that disclosedness which is at the heart of Reader ministry, particularly if it is to be defined in theopoetic terms as that which crafts and re-crafts understanding of the divine from existing language, fully engages with everyday experiences and which subverts attempts to confine theology to thought processes.

These ideas lead to further thoughts, which are also developed in section 3, about how those who consider themselves to be ministers of word might be helped to understand different theories of language; its development, how it is used, and for what purpose. Through teaching and engagement with such theories, the intuitive linguistic skills of Readers can be made conscious and skills developed that will enhance ministerial practices through an awareness of the more poetic forms of language intended to pass on deeper spiritual understanding. Heidegger and Ricoeur lead me to believe that what we are doing when we use language, and therefore in the practice of ministry of word, is enabling an expression of that which is present in our inner beings, and through the poetic process of paying close attention are bringing into words that which is present in the inner landscape of others and indeed of all creation.

Vocation

Divine call to, or sense of fitness for, a career or occupation.”
(Concise Oxford Dictionary)

It is necessary to acknowledge that narrative does, in some cases, have the power to change the way in which the inner landscape “charged with the grandeur of God” (Hopkins) is perceived and communicated to the outer world. There is evidence that people who live by destructive or false narratives are constrained by the stories that are told. For Christ this is expressed in the way that “women’s stories have not been told”. She goes on to articulate a sense of the way in which “stories give shape to lives” and that “women often live inauthentic stories provided by a culture they did not create” (Christ, 1980:1). It is also true that, within the world of the church, Readers have lived with a “story provided by a culture they did not create”. The culture of the

church until very recently has led to an identification of ministry in general, and of vocation in particular, with ordination. The national Church of England website now redresses that balance for those searching advice on vocations, stating that

there is a further calling, a particular calling, sometimes called a 'vocation' which is not for everyone but may be for you. This particular calling is to serve God and all people through one of the Church's authorised lay or ordained ministries. For this particular calling you have to allow your sense of vocation to be tested by the Church through its discernment processes.

Many people feel called to serve God through ministry in various different forms, some of these may be Ordained Ministry, Reader Ministry, Church Army Evangelist or as a monk or nun within the religious life community.

(Church of England, 2016)

Beyond that first page, however, there is a link to books to help the discernment process further. While there are a few recommended generic books on vocation, there are then thirty six on ordained ministry and nine on the religious life but not one recommended book for those considering licensed lay ministries. It is within this narrative of the institution of the Church of England's understanding of vocation that Readers live. This narrative is strengthened by the tendency to define Reader ministry not simply as a lay ministry but in comparison with ordained ministries. Still on a number of diocesan websites those discerning a vocation to lay ministry are told that "Readers are ... selected ...with the same rigour as ordinands... They have a rigorous theological training equivalent to clergy ... have a ministry within their local team and generally stay where they live, not being deployed as a priest might be" (Carlisle Diocese, 2016). This tendency to comparison and emphasis on vocations to ordained ministry has, I would argue, led to a context in which Readers have often lived within a story that has not felt authentic as far as vocation is concerned. It is my belief that the story that has been lived by has not changed the essential nature of lay vocations, but has suppressed their expression. In so doing it has left us in a position where Readers have not known how to tell their story and therefore the wider community of the church has not heard its richness and vocational depth. While I am intent on giving voice to a positively identified sense of what Reader ministry of word means, I feel the need to recognise these inauthentic stories by which many Readers have felt they have had to live for a number of years. If it is possible to extend Christ's assertion that "women's stories rarely have been told from their own perspectives" (1980:4) to saying that Readers' stories rarely have been told from their own perspectives then I am, in the writing of this thesis, and in this research's contribution to the stories told in *Instruments of Christ's Love* (Tovey et. al., 2016), taking it upon myself to begin to redress this imbalance.

Women's new naming of self and world often reflect wholeness, a movement toward overcoming the dualisms of self and world, body and soul, nature and spirit, rational and emotional, which have plagued Western consciousness. (Christ 1980:14)

This does not, to me, say that the new story creates the identity but that it is possible to express the 'self' in a way that authentically articulates an understanding of that which has existed but not been expressed. By encouraging an awareness and understanding of inscape, of the essential nature of all things "charged with the grandeur of God" (Hopkins) and of the logos which allows people to "actively disclose existence" (Pell, 2012:11) it is my belief that Readers will experience with Merton that "on-going force awakening him to his deepest Self" (Cooper, 2005:127).

Of those writing about Reader ministry in the late 20th century, Hiscox comes closest to identifying Reader ministry as vocational pointing out the requirement on those who become Readers to "work out their call to serve God as trained and accredited laypeople as they grow in their faith within a changing Church and a changing society" (Hiscox, 1991:1). However, having identified this sense of vocation, she also highlights "the battles, the reluctance and long processes to acknowledge, authorise and encourage the ministry of Readers" (Baughen, 1990:vii). Vocation to lay ministry is often worded in terms of "a very English pragmatism, based on a more honest recognition of the Church of England's present straitened circumstances (involving reduced numbers of clergy, declining regular members and serious financial constraints)" (Burton and Whitehead, 1999:17). Some of the most developed thinking about calling and vocation is found in the more recent work of Rowling and Gooder. A whole chapter is dedicated to "discerning a call to Reader ministry" (Rowling and Gooder, 2011:39-56). The Ministry Division of the Church of England's criteria for selection for training as a Reader are considered. The criteria as quoted by Rowling and Gooder do not, however include any reference to the lay identity of Readers. They are, rather, a generic set of criteria headed simply "Ministry in the Church of England". (2009:50). The questions asked by Rowling and Gooder and the suggested process by which someone might discern a call to Reader ministry are either general to all ministry or specific to the task of the Reader which they confine to "preaching and teaching" in a "pastoral context" (2009:43). While this is a mainstream interpretation of what Reader ministry entails, it does seem to have lost something of the concept of Readers as pioneers held by King:

In future Readers should, and probably will, be much used as lay specialist speakers, who will expound the Christian Faith from their point of view as, for example, doctors, lawyers, plumbers, gardeners, physicists, or stockbrokers, and will do so because they will be known to be members of these occupations and professions, and at the

same time official ministers of the Church and its spokesmen by being Readers. This they will probably do more often in discussion groups, in house groups, and at purely secular meetings than in pulpits or church halls. There will be other ways, too, in which Readers will be used to speak and discuss the Faith as people fully engaged in the secular world's activities who also have a deep knowledge of the Church and its Gospel (King, 1973:154).

A recent informal information-gathering day with around fifty Readers from my own diocese affirmed that this image of Reader ministry is now one that many identify with in their day to day ministry in a way that is not yet acknowledged by much of the published material and publicity about Reader ministry. Many of those present at this day expressed firmly that they consider themselves to be exercising their Reader ministry in work, amongst friends and family and in intentionally missional activities in their local communities. While this cannot be classed as pioneer ministry, which requires the minister to be “involved in the setting up of a fresh expression” (Dodds, 2016:97) it is evidence of a broad, missional sense of vocation suggesting a wider vision of Reader ministry than that of the popular preacher, teacher definition. Readers around the country are living out ministries that fulfil all of the five marks of mission:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

(Anglican Consultative Council, 1984:49)

As evangelists, apologists, catechists, chaplains, Street Pastors, allotment keepers and ecologists, some of them tell their own stories in their own words describing their work as being to “share the good news with those around them, listening and meeting needs where they can” (Buck, 2016:76). In addition, there are Readers whose work is intentionally pioneering. Dodds goes further when he argues that in all of the six disciplines contained in definitions of Reader ministry: “preaching; teaching; conducting worship; pastoral work; evangelistic work; liturgical work” there is the possibility of Reader ministry being prophetic, and therefore pioneering by finding “original ways of engaging in the disciplines or applying known theory to the particular context of ministry in the discipline” (Dodds, 2016:108). It has been important to bear in mind that an inscaped sense of vocation to Reader ministry may contain any of these features.

Layness

It is that last expression of vocation which King (1973) and Dodds (2016) identify as that of a calling to a pioneer ministry which probably most enlightens the sense that Readers express to a distinct lay vocation. It is the everyday work and social contexts in which Readers find themselves because of their layness that define the vocation. It is also this very aspect of being a Reader which has been addressed least in any of the literature. Almost all of the participants in this research identified their layness as being integral to their identity and vocation. Searching the available literature for works relating to lay ministry reveals a significant lack of specifically named and focused work from an Anglican perspective. We read that "all ministries, lay and ordained, find their place within the economy of God for the Church. Each should be affirmed and supported and made the most of" (Hind, 2007:x). However, the conclusions of the report introduced by these words recommend that Readers should be encouraged to have their vocation "further tested" (FAOG, 2007:160)³ with the intention of gaining more vocations to ordained ministry. This suggests a lack of theological emphasis within this report on what it is to be called to be lay. A little more has been written from within, and about, the Roman Catholic Church (Schoenherr and Yamane, 2004:xviii). Having said that, much of what is written relates to comparisons of beliefs between priests and lay people rather than expressing a theology of laity or of lay ministry. All that is written about discipleship clearly relates to living as a lay Christian but the development of these ideas into a theology of lay ministry which might, in turn, enhance understanding of collaborative ministry is lacking. Many highly educated people are exercising ministry as lay people. Even more are working as lay theologians, informing those who minister in pastoral settings. This meeting point between academy and practice is continually explored in the work of the British and Irish Association for Practical Theology and by the cohorts of Professional Doctorate students across the country. As this corpus of work develops it will potentially offer more into the development of a theology not only of ministry or laity but also of lay ministry. For now, the writing of American Orthodox scholar Rossi offers a theology of laity living lives dedicated to ministering to others when he claims that "The lay person is, by definition, one whose whole being, whose entire existence is a becoming, a living theology, theophatic, a luminous place of the presence of the Parousia, God's coming again into this world" saying that "as laypersons, our call is to fully live a life of total, loving union with our loving Savior. Then, when we meet others, for some of them, we will be the only Jesus they will ever meet" (Rossi, 2002). Again this points to a slow awakening of an awareness of inscape, communicated to others through instress. It is

³ FAOG is the Faith and Order Advisory Group of the Church of England. Its report *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church* was produced in 2007

this locating of oneself in the world, in that place of meeting with others that tells of the lay identity and ministry to which, I believe, Ruth refers when she says

Layness
puts me in there
with all
that is nitty
and gritty

Wordsmith

There was a shared sense among the participants, both group members and interviewees, that a major element of their 'being' was to work with words. Participants clearly considered a love of words and an ability to work with words to be something engrained in them, something that I have chosen to classify as belonging to their (and my own) inscape. Many of the ways in which this understanding was communicated, though, involved action. Creative verbs such as "distilling" (Leo Hines), "sifting" (Marilyn), "crafting" (Ruth) and "spinning" (John) were used to express the importance of the wordsmithing aspect of ministry of word. This theme exemplifies most clearly the inability to speak of inscape with reference to humans beings without there being some reference to the relational aspect of knowing. The meeting point between inscape and instress is in this sense of identification. Further reading around themes represented by the idea that Readers might identify themselves as wordsmiths is therefore considered in more detail in the next stanza in relation to the concept of instress.

Reflexive response

I have heard it all my life,
A voice calling a name I recognized as my own.

Sometimes it comes as a soft-bellied whisper.
Sometimes it holds an edge of urgency.

But always it says: Wake up my love. You are walking asleep.
There's no safety in that!

Remember what you are and let this knowing
take you home to the Beloved with every breath.

Hold tenderly who you are and let a deeper knowing
colour the shape of your humanness.
(Oria, 2003:iv extract from the poem The Call)

The data from the research and the further reading involved in crafting this stanza has led me to consider my own identity and its outworking in my ministry. Through my consideration of essence and being, I have found the process to be integrative and healing in many ways. I understand my own desire to combine academic thought and practice more fully. In addition I have become aware of the strengths of embodied forms of knowing. Not only have my soul and my body become more consciously

integrated, but my mind too is now integral to who I am and what I feel called to as a vocationally lay person. In biblical terms I am reminded of the verse in Paul's letter to the Romans in which he exhorts them to "be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God" (Romans 12.2 NRSV).

Throughout this stanza I have ensured that I have remained as true to the original data as possible, but my influence cannot be ignored. While the co-operative research process was as carefully handled as possible, maintaining the balance between participants' involvement and my own interpretation becomes more complex as the post-empirical phase of the research progresses. My intention in this section of the thesis is to re-present the research findings and to explore further relevant topics. Section 3 is intentionally more interpretive as the contributions to understanding, knowledge and formation programmes are considered.

Critique

In this stanza I have considered just a small amount of data from the interviews and group discussions and related it to relevant literature. It is in the very nature of inscape that less will be communicated about it but that what is said will contain a depth and complexity that needs careful consideration. Having worked with the data so far I would very much like to revisit participants now to ask further questions, to build on the data and to enrich the quality, particularly of this particular stanza which produced a great deal of commonality in the language used and concepts expressed, but very little in-depth explanation or exploration. To do so, however, would not be possible at the time of writing. More than a year has elapsed since the original participatory research took place. Participants' circumstances have changed. Some have changed roles, others are working with new colleagues and one has been seriously ill. It is my belief that the quality of the process has outweighed the minor limitation in data. A much more detailed research project would be interesting and of future value. My own desire to learn more will have to wait for another opportunity and another research project.

Stanza 2 - Instress

Reframing the term

It is possible to propose that the common task of both the poet and the seeker of the holy is to foster a quality of attentiveness and an active readiness to see their location with new eyes and to encounter the divine in its places and people.

(Shelton, 2014:51)

In these words I believe Shelton offers an insight into how Hopkins' concepts of instress and inscape might be brought together in ministry. In the previous stanza of this chapter the themes considered created in me an awareness that in order to find the inscape of an object the observer needs to pay attention; to look deeply. Whether this is in the way that Hopkins describes paying attention to the bluebell or in the more introspective work of finding our own inner landscape in order to know what and who it is that God has called to this ministry, inscape can only be found through close attention to detail. In this second stanza I will consider the possibility of moving from this depth of attention, from the ability to find the essence, the "ontological secret" (Pick, 1942:33) within oneself, others or created things to a desire to draw on that essential understanding in order to communicate something of the understanding of the divine in and through creation. It is not my intention to claim this quality exclusively for Readers, but it is my belief that the qualities and skills captured in the found poems (presented below) represent an intuitive use of, and a potential to intentionally develop, specific word-based crafting skills which represent something of the artisanal quality of the Reader's calling, where artisan is taken to mean those who fashion objects and "the texts they wrote and..... literate intermediaries who put their actions into a form both comprehensible and accessible to a wider audience" (Smith, 2004:31). In the context of Reader ministry I suggest that artisans are those whose craft is that of working with words and the application is the use of this craft in the context of ministry.

In relation to Hopkins' work, this quality relates to his concept of instress. As stated when considering the original literature, one definition of instress is that it is

a word that (Hopkins) attached to the intensity of feeling and associations which something beautiful brought to him and a desire to convert it to God (Pick, 1942: 32).

Where inscape speaks of the essential make-up of the created thing, instress speaks of its impact on another. Instress, therefore, is an important concept even if there are few ways of communicating its affect other than through varied qualitative expressions. Peters argues that, in his theological writing, Hopkins uses the term 'instress' as almost

synonymous with 'feeling'. Not the feelings that are related to mood, however, but those that arise from contact with the inscape of an object (Pick, 1942: 16,17). These feelings are often interpreted as an experience of God through the close observation of an object and a relational response to its instress.

As stated in my original consideration of existing literature, by close, solitary, contemplative examination of this world, Hopkins seems to have come into a deeper relationship with God. His awareness of creation leads him to an understanding of Christ. This is then expressed through the use of language designed to communicate that understanding to others. The inscape of each thing expresses something of the One who created it which is experienced by the observer as instress. For the purposes of this research it is this aspect of instress that is utilised in the consideration of ways in which ministry of word is experienced as ministry which meets with The Word through its use of language and communication skills. Not only in preaching and teaching, but in all ministerial engagements I would argue that to be able to recognise feelings relating to 'ontological secrets', the very being of a person, which go beyond words and behaviours, has the potential to enhance all ministerial encounters and all pastoral experiences. This in turn allows those in the encounter to move more deeply into that sacred space created by such recognition and honouring of the core of a person's being.

I am therefore reframing the definition of instress for the purposes of this research as **a sense of God's presence experienced through intentional relational encounters**. Intentionality is important. Hopkins intentionally observed the object in which he found inscape which led him to experience instress and to deepen his understanding of God as creator. He then expressed this experience in the words of his poems with the intention of communicating this relational experience to others. It is this aspect of instress which I suggest can deepen our understanding of the way in which ministry of word can offer an experience of **relational interpersonal sacred space**.

Research findings

This section will report the research findings contained in the found poems which highlight a common desire among participants to use their sense that they are called to a ministry of crafting of words to bring others closer to God. The significant themes emerging from the research group were those of **words that shift and change, playing with words** and **words offering a secret touch**. Reader ministry was identified on a number of occasions as a **bridge ministry**. These topics were discussed, thoughts journaled and ideas revisited on a number of occasions. The general sense from the group, though, was that as Readers, while much of the crafting of words is related to sermon preparation, the ministry of word is often expressed in places other than the pulpit or even church. Readers are active in paid employment

and in social settings. The group wanted to emphasise that much of the ministry of word offered in these settings offers a 'secret touch'. Like the woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment (Mark 5:26-34) encounters in crowded places, as people go about their daily lives, often leave a sense that unspoken encounters and possibly even a healing touch have taken place. The themes of words shifting and changing and playing with words were considered to highlight the need to take care of how words are used. There was a sense that those who have a gift with words need to be aware of the power of words and the way they can be manipulated. As a result the most often visited topic arising from the group relating to the theme of instress was that of **listening**. Often other topics were tempered by conversations about the need to first listen. If acknowledging the inscape of the other or the community is important if the point of instress is to be found, then listening is possibly the most important skill to be learned.

With the exception of the skill of listening, the themes identified in this section are all communicated through the use of metaphor. It is this intuitive use of metaphor which strengthens the argument for considering Reader ministry of word to be theopoetic in nature. Theology is not confined to thought processes but is acknowledged as being at the heart of lived experiences and relational encounters of those involved in ministry of word. It is communicated in terms of feeling (instress) as much as it is in terms of thinking.

Extracts from the interviewees' found poems are presented in some detail below. Some of the thoughts expressed relate easily to the themes explored by the research group. Others are new themes and will be presented as such. Themes are presented in an order that acknowledges first the most obvious context for an awareness of instress in Reader ministry; the pulpit or a teaching role in a small group. The word-crafting theme is then taken from church settings into the day to day world of those involved in this ministry. Finally the skill at the heart of this craft, that of listening, is considered.

Words that shift and change

This theme grew out of the sense that, as people of the Book, a Bible-based faith community, Christians are constantly attempting to make new sense of the biblical text. Part of the identity of ministers of word is that of the preacher.

The Church of England is part of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation.

(Preface to Reader licensing service Church of England)

These words are read as part of the introduction to the licensing service at which all Readers will have made a declaration of assent, committing themselves to “proclaiming (the faith) afresh in each generation”. As preachers with this mandate, interviewees expressed their ideas about the nature of preaching intended to bring about change in a number of very creative ways:

ongoing impact of The Book
into our lives now

i'd be grateful to
make sense of
the wonderful truths
in the bible
for those who've forgotten about it
never known about it (John)

Cloths of meaning
Grave clothes
unfolded
Removed
Meaning resurrected

Unfolded words
Unfolded lives
Hearts and heads
changed for ever

The folded napkin
I haven't finished
We are part
of the ongoing
Word's unfolding (Leo Hines)

Pitting myself against the Word
Jacob-like
Wrestling a sermon into being
Pitting myself against myself
Lord take down my barriers
Allow the Word to speak

Word as Sacrament
Readers as conduits of Grace

We're identifying the divine
In other languages

Value encounters
with The Word
By being founded on the bible (Monica)

Prod
Disturb
Encourage
to take away
To do something

Allow people to think
How do they feel
about the message
And respond...

Challenge to grow
Change
Be transformed
Continually

To develop
and grow
To think
and respond (Marilyn)

Playing with words

What was said with reference to the theme of playing with words was less specifically related to preaching. Although much of what emerges could relate (and some does) to the context of preaching, there is a sense in these words that wherever we use words they have a power and are precious. There is also a sense of creativity and the skill of the craftsperson emerging from the words that follow. An enjoyment of the role of the wordsmith and a love of words were recurring themes in both group and interview conversations. Literature relating to the art of preaching and the sense of play will be considered later in this stanza when the works of Brueggemann, Buechner and Gadamer are considered.

the greatest thing I ever heard
so simple
I do what Jesus did
I tell stories

how great the prophets were
in using words
to help people to say
ah, I see.

word
poetry
words in a sermon
ought to help people to say
ah, yes

spinning together of ideas
crafting words (John)

A precious stone
crafted offering
light
skill
value

The process of distilling
is important
Whisky is distilled
Water is distilled
Thoughts distilled
and words given life

Make words meaningful
Let them live

Let them breathe

I put words around
things
Dandelion seeds
On the updraft
Like Hopkins
Open up meaning
without horizon
from the little tiny
world visions

Find in the minutely ordinary
the glory of God

Word-weaving
Crafting
Gifts to the distressed (Leo Hines)

Cast seeds on the lawn
See how they're picked up

Making space
For the word
To take root

I can see
That Readers are wordsmiths
Linguists

Be careful with words
Less is more

Know your responsibility
And to whom you are accountable

Are they my words?
or His words?
Are they authentic?
Are they true?
How do you know you've got it right?
You're only offering
what you think you're received (Monica)

Not just what you say
but how you say it

Mulling and sifting
The craft of the wordsmith
in preparation
for preaching

Preach to the head
Preach to the heart

Finding the key
that will touch the heart

Keep it simple
Direct
Ordinary

The words will speak
for themselves (Marilyn)

Preaching
Teaching
Innovating

Be very careful
of your words
Use them wisely
Slowly

My craft
is words (Ruth)

Reader ministry as a bridge

A common theme was that of Reader ministry being one of a bridge, or of finding oneself in a gap. The gap was experienced between church and world, work and faith or different cultures in many contexts. The question “Who am I when I’m doing this work?” (Leach and Paterson, 2015 :193) is inherent in many of the expressions. This gap was expressed differently by each person, but the one common factor is that this is a relational place; one in which “interpersonal dynamics” and “structural dynamics” are playing a part and which requires a commitment to “listening to the context” (Leach and Paterson, 2015:192). These gaps are often places in which the qualities of instress, of relational interpersonal sacred space, are experienced.

Reader ministry
Between
On the edge
In the gaps
Between a rock and a hard place
In that overlapping place
A painful place sometimes
But interesting
Dynamic
Creative
That’s the sort of place
Of Word ministry

We interpret
We don’t translate
To interpret
Absorb a culture
Absorb the person
The personality
The context
Everything (Monica)

Sit in the gap
That’s where the Reader belongs

I’m lay
I’m part of this congregation
From amongst
from within (Marilyn)

Locally rooted
Ministry within
not without
Without communion
Within community

My ordinariness
challenges others
To see differently (Ruth)

Secret Touch

The theme itself emerged from a poem written by one of the group members. It contained the repeated sentence “it was just a secret touch” (Amber) which engaged the imagination of group members and led to considerable exploration in both action and reflection stages of the research process. Not having been party to those considerations and not having access to the poem, I had not expected so much information to emerge from the interviewees in relation to this theme. However, there was clearly a sense that as Readers (lay people involved in every aspect of life) there were many opportunities for words to be used in a way that became sacred even when those offering and receiving this ministry were not necessarily aware of the touch of the Spirit. In considering further literature relevant to this theme later in this chapter, I will draw on the work of Lings and consideration of the seven sacred spaces of new monasticism as a way of thinking about how student Readers might be made aware of the potential of bringing people closer to God’s healing presence through ministry of word in the spaces where the Holy Spirit is known. Meanwhile, the words that interviewees have offered which enrich the understanding of this theme:

the spirit could speak
through something
i didn’t know i was saying (John)

Nation-healing leaves
Nation-healing words
from the Tree of Life

Words have power
Because The Word
is in words

Sacred space
Here and now
and everywhere

Encounter the Sacred
Leave with a sense
of numinous

The sacred within you
at all times
meets the sacred
in the other (Leo Hines)

Specific lay ministry
Of word

And listen
In the privileged position
Of sitting at such
Interesting tables

Enabling the space for that person
Actually to identify it
For themselves

You touch the divine
Through the relationship
The relationship using words

Silence and space
Are essential to ministry
We're too busy with words
Value silence
And space
That's where it goes deep
Space to allow the Holy Spirit in (Monica)

Maybe it's in the pause
The words unsaid
God's spirit
speaking to hearts
In the gap
The pause
The silence (Marilyn)

Words of song
for those
losing
the power of words

Here and now
Bringing God
Where we are
From a human perspective
Bringing God to humanity (Ruth)

Additional voices

Leo Hines and Monica spoke of different interpretations of the creative role of the wordsmith that I feel warrant separate consideration from those expressed in the general themes above. For Leo Hines there is a seriousness and a responsibility involved in being a wordsmith. Being ready for the work at hand and being aware of the responsibility involved are themes that are expressed beautifully:

Always keeping my tools handy
pen and paper by my bed
A wordsmith
Ready
Prepared
Inspired

Sacred responsibility
to break open the word
Reader responsibility
Sacred
Holy
Word-breakers

Monica, likewise speaks in poetic language about her sense that ministry of word is not only like music, but is in itself music.

Ministry of word is music
Because music carries
all sorts of things
Like emotions
and beauty
and expressions
and mystery
It interprets
It articulates something
It can transport you
It can challenge you
And all of those things
And I think our ministry
of the word
is a bit similar to that

I give the last word in this section to Ruth who sums up neatly the essence of the data relating to both inscape and instress when she says

Reader - here's your thread
you've always been called
to teach
to craft words
to listen
to be yourself.

Listening

Interestingly, listening was a theme that occurred much more often and with greater weighting in the group discussions than it did in the themes considered by interviewees. Only two of the interviewees (Leo Hines and Monica) directly mentioned listening. For Monica it was a very significant theme as is apparent from the extracts from the data below. It may be that the theme seemed to have more significance in the group because of the nature of group work. As a group it was necessary to listen to one another and to allow space for different views to be voiced, drawing attention to this aspect of ministry of word in a very practical way that was not so in the interview process. In this way the method of data collection may well have influenced the data itself. Consideration of the role of listening will form part of the chapters in section 3 of

the thesis, *the performance*, when attention is paid to how the information gathered might be used to establish a programme of formation for Readers in Training and in ongoing ministerial development. All that is said below will be taken into consideration as the possibility of a theopoetic framework for formation for ministry is considered in practical terms.

Listen
Be mindful
Mindful of words
Mindful of lives

Listen
And listen better
when seekers approach (Leo Hines)

It's a listening
and a finding of language
Language that fits
Fits the person

Articulate
Interpret
Listen
But do them in the opposite order

Listen to others
Drawing our own experience
other people's experience in
And reflecting back
but in order to do that
We have to articulate
What it is that we've heard
And experienced

Listening in the world

That's why we're there
Listening
That is part of the ministry
of The Word

Listen
In the world
Of the world
But listening to The Word
and bringing the two
Together (Monica)

Further literature

The majority of the data related to different aspects of use of language in a crafted and skilful way which often referred to the preaching and teaching nature of Reader ministry. The contributions relating to this theme will therefore provide the springboard

for exploration of further literature in this stanza. Brueggemann and Buechner's work will inform the thinking around the theme of words that shift and change, while Gadamer offers insights into the concept of play.

Words that shift and change and Playing with words

These two themes will be considered together as, despite the different emphases on the use to which the words are being put, the related literature and the skills that may be identified as a result of engaging with the data and the literature are similar and transferable.

The descriptions used by research participants when considering the ways in which words shift and change and how recipients of those words might be changed, and even transformed, were predominantly metaphorical, reinforcing the poetic quality of this ministry. Unfolding "cloths of meaning" and being "part/of the ongoing/Word's unfolding" (Leo Hines) are examples of such language which is at once playful and movingly deep. The thoughts unfold, just as the language used to embody them is of unfolding. This is language and playfulness in which "what is intended is to-and-fro movement that is not tied to any goal that would bring it to an end" (Gadamer, 2004:104). It is language that I would argue, through its playfulness "can help us 'toy' with, and discover, God's shalom" (Hamman, 2012:49).

With this rather serious playfulness in mind I now turn to the sense that use of words by those involved in Reader ministry is part of an identity as wordsmiths who are "spinning together ideas/crafting words" (John), offering words as "dandelion seeds/on the updraft" (Leo Hines), or seeds cast "on the lawn/See how they're picked up" (Monica). This "mulling and sifting/The craft of the wordsmith" is seen as being about "Not just what you say/but how you say it" (Marilyn). The desire to offer "a precious stone/crafted offering/light/skill/value" speaks of a careful and creative act; one that in theopoetic terms produces something new from the words available and offers them generously to others. Those who experience this way of working most intensively I would suggest are the writers in the field of homiletics. It is to their work that I turn now to deepen my thinking about how an understanding of this desire to craft words and offer them to others, whether in preaching or in many other ministerial contexts, might be enhanced.

For now the literature will simply be considered in order to enrich the thinking about the concept of crafting of words arising from the data. Any possible skills to be gained as a result of the consideration of the literature will form part of the chapters in section 3 of the thesis when the 'performance', the practical application of the insights gained, will be addressed.

Your word is a light to our feet and a lamp to our path.
Your word is a glue of the universe wherein the whole creation
coheres.
Your word is the address of promise and command by which we live.
Your word has come fleshed among us full of grace and truth.
We are creatures of your word and we give thanks for it.
For all that we are more dazzled that your word
is carried, uttered, acted
by frail vulnerable human agents.

(Brueggemann, 2003:71).

The data gathered from both group and interviewees suggests that Readers consider themselves to be amongst those “frail vulnerable agents” desiring to carry, utter and enact the Word of God. In keeping with Leo Hines’ dramatic image of preaching being about unfolding cloths of meaning and “part/of the ongoing/Word’s unfolding”, and exemplified by the prayer above, Brueggemann asserts that

the task and possibility of preaching is to open out the good news of the gospel with alternative modes of speech - speech that is dramatic, artistic, capable of inviting persons to join in another conversation, free of the reason of technique, unencumbered by ontologies that grow abstract, unembarrassed about concreteness..... Imaginative speech that permits people to enter into new worlds of faith and to participate in joyous, obedient life (Brueggemann, 1989:3).

While Brueggemann imagines this new world of creative, dramatic speech to belong to the pulpit I would argue that the concept of language that encourages imagination and “permits people to enter into new worlds of faith”, once learned and honed with preaching in mind, will infect conversations about faith and be something that is offered by ministers of word whether in the pulpit or in any other space that has the potential to be experienced as sacred.

An endorsement of a theopoetic paradigm of ministry of word is contained in the words that follow with the claim that “to address the issue of truth greatly reduced requires us to be *poets that speak against a prose world*” (Brueggemann 1989:3 - italics original). He exhorts preachers to continue the writing traditions of the Bible, as do those who talked about the “ongoing impact of The Book/into our lives now” (John) and “pitting myself against the Word” (Monica) hoping that their words would “disturb/Encourage/to take away something” (Marilyn). Saying that the biblical tradition of poetic writing and

prophecy is what is needed from preachers, Brueggemann recognises that “this poetic/prophetic utterance runs great risk. It runs the risk of being heard as fantasy and falsehood” (1983:5). If Readers are to be those who fulfil a calling to this prophetic use of language which is about “using words/to help people to say/ah, I see” (John) it will be necessary for training and formation to focus not only on the truths contained within church history, doctrine and theology, but also on the modes of communication available to those called to ministry of word.

Reader ministry as a bridge

The idea that the Reader is a bridge was not a dominant one in the data, but it did occur and has been used by a number of commentators over the years. To suggest that Reader ministry is a bridge can seem to refer to polarised positions between which the Reader moves, for example church and world, clergy and laity. To interpret the term to mean bridge-builder, however, gives it a different emphasis. It may be that Readers are called to use their communication skills to build bridges between people of different nationalities and backgrounds (Nappin, 2002:12). It may also be that Readers experience their ministry as one of the bridge not because they join two polarised groups or places but because they find themselves “On the edge/In the gaps” (Monica); those whose “ordinariness/challenges others/To see differently” (Ruth). This is not a particularly comfortable place to be. It may not be that the ‘bridge’ brings people and groups together in acts of reconciliation. It may simply be that occupying the place of the bridge, being “in the gaps”, allows for a close-looking, an observation of the contexts in which ministry is taking place. Into this close-looking, God may become known and the ministry of being the bridge, the one “in the gaps” become theological and poetic.

God is the crack
where the story begins.
We are the crack
where the story gets interesting.

...

God is the fracture,
and the ache in your voice,
God is the story
flavoured with choice.

...

God is the woman who bleeds
and who touches.
We are the story
of courage or blushes. (O Tuama, 2015:129)

From this place of observation in the gaps, as lay people whose layness “puts me in there/with all/that is nitty/and gritty” it is possible to meet with people who would not necessarily seek the ministry of those in ordained ministries. It is possible, from this place, to offer words and space that may allow others to experience acceptance and healing. This quality of Reader ministry was explored by the research group and metaphorically referred to, in Amber’s words as offering a “secret touch”.

Secret Touch

“Sacred space/here and now/and everywhere” is how Leo Hines refers to the space in which the secret touch can be known. It is not only in preaching and teaching that Readers experience this sense of The Word being in the words and touching “the divine/through the relationship/the relationship using words” (Monica). Those who took part in the group discussions were clear about their belief that ministry of word can lead to healing. This extract from Amber’s poem, her response to the story of the woman with long-term bleeding touching the hem of Jesus’ cloak and finding healing (Luke 8.42b-48), highlights the power of the secret touch and the beauty of healing experienced in this way.

It was just a secret touch.
No-one would know among so many people,
I only had to slip through the crowd
To reach out my hand and touch your garment.

It was just a secret touch;
The touch that changed my life, that made me whole.
But you knew, Lord.
You felt my touch, amongst all those
Pushing, shoving, jostling people.

It was just a secret touch
And wonder of wonders, you called me ‘Daughter’,
Such a precious moment.
‘Daughter, your faith has made you whole’

It was just a secret touch.

Commenting on the bible passage in Luke’s gospel on which this poem is based, O Tuama (2015:150) says

Jesus turns around, having felt in his own body that something had happened, and asks the urgent question, even at the disbelief of his followers. ‘You’re asking who touched you?’ they might have said. ‘Everybody is touching you. We’re pushing through a crowd.’ But there is touch and there is touch, we all know that.

To Wright (2001:105) this passage tells of “the presence of Jesus, getting his hands dirty with the problems of the world”. “There is touch and there is touch”. The desire to offer a “secret touch” in a “sacred space/here and now/and everywhere” (Leo Hines) is at the heart of what is said about inscape by research participants. This sacred space

may be a church and the secret touch might be offered through the crafted words of a sermon. However, many more opportunities can be identified when someone whose ministry is intrinsically part of who they are might be in contact with others and be instrumental in offering an encounter with the divine in very ordinary circumstances; getting their hands dirty with the problems of those to whom they minister.

Lings (2009) provides one lens through which this theme can be considered in his work on the ways in which the sacred spaces of traditional monasticism can speak to, and be incorporated into, forms of new monasticism. He recognises seven such spaces; cell, chapel, chapter, cloister, garden, refectory and scriptorium (Lings, 2009:7-29). I would argue that there is a further space not considered by Lings; that of the infirmary. In all of these places a secret touch of God can be experienced or expressed. In private prayer (in the cell) it is possible to “Encounter the Sacred/Leave with a sense/of numinous” (Leo Hines). In chapel the secret touch may be experienced through “God’s spirit/speaking to hearts/In the gap/In the pause/In the silence” (Marilyn). The tensions of decision-making processes belong to time in chapter. They often require a secret touch “here and now/Bringing God/Where we are/From a human perspective/Bringing God to humanity” (Ruth). Incidental and accidental everyday encounters represented by the cloister are times when “the spirit could speak/through something/I didn’t know I was saying” (John). The garden is the place of work. Many Readers talk of their place of work, whether paid employment, voluntary work or activities in the local community, as a place where they are aware of the secret touch of ministry of word being offered and a space in which it is recognised that “The sacred within you/at all times/meets the sacred/in the other” (Leo Hines). Refectory hospitality gives opportunity to “listen/In the privileged position/Of sitting at such/Interesting tables” (Monica). Listening and contributing to conversations around “interesting tables” allows ministers of word, particularly lay ministers of word, to offer the secret touch of ministry in many different environments. Scriptorium study and creativity offer Monica an opportunity for a secret touch of emotion “and beauty/and expressions/and mystery” particularly beautifully expressed in her sense that “ministry of word is music”. I would add the infirmary to Lings’ identified sacred spaces. The inspiration behind the poem that gave its name to this section of data presentation was the healing of the woman with bleeding. It speaks powerfully of the secret touch that leads to healing and wholeness; the kind of healing that “is not an event, but a journey... because, essentially, Christian healing is not just the wonder of physical or mental recovery, however startling the occasion; it is ultimately the repairing and developing of relationships with God, with others, with ourselves and with the world and society in which we live” (Parker, 2001:1). It is the possibility of this healing ministry that the secret touch offered in all of Lings’ sacred spaces seems to open to lay ministers of word as expressed through the research group sessions and interviews.

Listening

As part of the preparation to be able to deliver such a skilled mode of communication as is involved in the craft of preaching and the intentionality of being present to others and God, and thus being instrumental in the creation of sacred spaces wherever encounters take place, a further theme emerged from the research; that of listening. Of the art of listening it has been said that “we are created for listening. It is our proper business” (Brueggemann, 1989:81). This listening, Brueggemann says, is difficult. Our culture and our access to technology (and he speaks of the technology of 1989) creates for us an environment in which “the notions of self-sufficiency and autonomy that govern our consciousness make listening difficult and obedience nearly impossible” (1989:82). However, it is identified by those taking part in this research and by many who write about pastoral care, that listening is a core skill which cannot be ignored. Long considers the need to develop an ability to listen to self, others, the world and God as she speaks of listening needing to be approached “not in a random way but as a ministry” (Long, 1990:xv). It is necessary, when listening, to have an ability to be silent; not needing to fill every gap in conversation. There is a skill to be learned, which forms part of the practical outworking of a theopoetic paradigm for formation of those in public ministry of word. Silence, as Williams warns, can be powerful in a negating way as well as offering acceptance and listening. In a humble account of his own ministry he says

in pastoral relationships we need to know also how to ‘read’ silences... My greatest pastoral mistakes have been when I sense that I have silenced someone, made them feel that they can’t speak, feel overwhelmed, disempowered (Williams, 2003:108).

The art of listening is, like most other skills identified by this research, one that needs to be practised. Whether listening to the story of one person in a pastoral encounter or more widely ‘in the world/of the world/but listening to The Word/and bringing the two/together’ (Monica) to continue the theopoetic theme, listening enables us to engage with everyday experiences and gives time and space in which God can be encountered without interpretation and resisting attempts to explain and translate experiences by confining theology to thought processes.

Reflexive response

My own identity has always been tied up with the concepts represented here. The metaphors offered by the research participants of words that shift and change, playing with words and words offering a secret touch have been quite difficult to write about in any kind of objective way. The fact that others share my desire to offer words as ministry has made this quite an emotionally charged stanza. In particular the past fifteen years of licensed ministry have been about an intentional use of words that might bring liberation, transformation and healing. My own experience is summed up in the words of two poems; one written before, and the other after, a week long retreat in

which, in silence, I discovered the healing power of 'new words' spoken into some historically painful situations.

The words I hear
Are of love
Lavished abundantly
All encompassing

The words I feel
Are of loss
Life-sapping, in-dwelling
All denying.

The words I know
Are knife-edged
Outer shine and sparkle
But in-cutting

The words I yearn for
Dove-gentle
Love-giving, in-living
All surmounting

Bathe in, bask in
Breathe in
My new words for you

Dove-gentle, love-filling
Soul-affirming
Resurrection words.

Reach for, and wrap well
in pleasure
healing long-lived pain.

Searching the centre
meet angels
where self lived alone.

Smother, steep, soak
old life
in whole, safe, new
Words

It is this sense of the power of ministry of word to heal and change that motivates my own ministry and, I now realise, the ministries of others. It is my belief that I have fairly represented those who spoke the words that have formed this stanza. In order to do so, I am aware that there has been a significant emotional cost in the writing of these words. Having been part of a co-operative research process, I have invested a significant amount of myself in all aspects of this stanza. It has taken a long time to craft, but the result is a deeper understanding of what I have known as embodied truth for many years. This understanding will enable me to make this knowledge available to others and to encourage these wordsmith qualities in all Reader ministry within my pastoral care.

Critique

While it has not always been simple to represent participants' ideas, presented in predominantly metaphorical language, in a way that is clear and concise, the research method did enable some deeply reflective work to take place, resulting in these rich metaphors. This is backed up anecdotally by Monica who was struggling with her identity as a Reader before her interview conversation. At the end of the conversation, however, she was able to say "I've come back to the idea that Readers are a good thing". This realisation grew out of her thinking about Reader ministry in general, and in particular about the meeting places that lay ministers of word are able to inhabit and the diverse, rich, transformative, poetic and theological encounters that take place in these many and varied environments. A table of results relating to a set of questionnaire responses would have been much simpler to code and to re-present alongside insights from further reading. The qualitative benefits of this stanza, however, in the sense of research that has been about "not so much the search for truth but to heal" (Reason, 1994:10) are immeasurable from my own perspective let alone the impact that this research can have beyond one individual participant researcher.

Stanza 3 - Selving

Reframing the term

Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves — goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,
Crying *Whát I dó is me: for that I came*.

(Hopkins: As Kingfishers Catch Fire)

Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve
Strokes of havoc unselfe
The sweet especial scene,
Rural scene, a rural scene,
Sweet especial rural scene.
(Hopkins: Binsey Poplars)

These two extracts from Hopkins' poems are examples of his use of the term selving. In the first, *As Kingfishers Catch Fire*, Hopkins is referring to the act of individuals "articulating a secret self inside them" (Kiernan, 2012). Through this act of articulation people show to the world that which is their individual character. I show to the world 'that for which I came' (Hopkins, 1877). In *Binsey Poplars* the term is used in the negative. The wielding of the axe in cutting down the poplars has 'unserved' the landscape. The act of destruction of one element of that landscape renders it not itself.

In this stanza of this chapter I am suggesting that Hopkins' term 'selving' can be applied to the expressions of vocation recorded in the found poems of this research. Each person, whilst expressing some common qualities and skills, articulated at least one feature of their ministry that they and they alone identified as being at the heart of their calling.

I am therefore defining selving, in the context of this thesis, as **each person's specific and personal understanding of their ministerial vocation; that to which they feel most strongly called (that 'for which [they] came')**. In the sum of these individual expressions of vocation will be seen the corporate identity of the church in each generation.

Research findings

Because of the nature of the material being considered in this stanza some of the ways in which participants articulated their understanding of individual call will be recounted,

but it is not possible for the consideration of literature that follows to encompass all of these expressions of identity. Instead, having noted participants' own articulations of what it is to cry "what I do is me: for that I came" (Hopkins) the rest of the stanza will concentrate on the one expression of this concept that I am able to examine in detail; that of my own selving as I have come to understand it as this research developed. This stanza is, therefore, predominantly reflexive and auto ethnographic, informed by the articulations of selving offered by some of those who took part in the research.

"Home-making
ministry"
and having "an evangelist's heart"

This was how Marilyn spoke of a sense of what being in ministry means. Pohl (1999:32) expresses the belief that those who offered hospitality in their homes were instrumental in the spreading of the gospel in the early days of Christianity. As such Marilyn's expression of being a home-maker may be intrinsically linked with the evangelist's heart. Tomlin (2013:92) claims that "if evangelism is in theological terms an invitation into the realm of the love of God, then it will naturally create space for hospitable conversation". He claims that Pohl's views offer a subversive example of hospitality as a "deeply Christian practice" (Tomlin, 2013:96). Many of Jesus' encounters are presented in the gospels as taking place within these "hospitable conversations". Among many possible examples of this subversive form of hospitality is the story of Mary being given permission to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to his teaching much to the annoyance of her sister Martha who is preparing the meal (Luke 10. 38-42). This kind of hospitality is radical in the extreme. Jesus is, according to Wright (2001:130)

redrawing the boundaries of God's people, sending out a clear message about how the gospel would reach to those outside the traditional borders. He was redrawing the boundaries between men and women *within* Israel, blurring lines which had been clearly laid down (*italics original*).

Tomlin also suggests that "hospitality provides a context for conversation, for encounter and thus transformation in the encounter with God, his church and the gospel" stating that "the gospel is an act of hospitality in which we discover who we are" (Tomlin, 2013:98). Marilyn's sense of being an evangelist and a home-maker, offering hospitality as an expression of ministry is consistent with Tomlin's analysis.

Monica speaks of ministry in a different way. For her ministry of word is itself music

Because music carries
all sorts of things
Like emotions
and beauty

and expressions
and mystery

She goes on to say that having found that music in the ministry it is necessary to

apply it
Find your calling's outworking
It's very personal

O'Donohue believes that "music embraces the whole person" and says that "perhaps this is where the mystical depth of music issues from: that threshold where the face of the soul becomes imbued with the strange tenderness of divine illuminations" (O'Donohue, 2003:72). This thought, together with his idea that "all poetry strives towards the condition of music" (O'Donohue, 2003:71) makes it possible to argue that within a theopoetic paradigm for ministry of word, one that crafts understanding of the divine and which subverts attempts to confine theology to thought processes, the minister will be aiming to utter words which create the condition in which "emotions and beauty and expressions and mystery" (Monica) are experienced and "the strange tenderness of divine illuminations" recognised.

Having said that, Leo's articulation of a personal outworking of this vocation is to say

I put words around
things
Dandelion seeds
On the updraft
Find in the minutely ordinary
the glory of God

It is possible to experience God in the extraordinary skills of the musician and in the ordinariness of everyday life. The poetic process allows ministers of word to inhabit both worlds; striving for words to offer the qualities of encounter that are found in music and for words to wrap around very ordinary things and to find in them, for self and others, "the glory of God" (Leo). For Gooder, "there is nothing wrong at all in worshipping God in and through beauty, but we need to recognise that God's desire is to be worshipped in the beauty of holiness - a beauty that can just as easily be found in mud as in gold" (Gooder, 2012:64). The artisan Reader often lives in the realities of the muddiness of the world and is called to interpret that to, and for, the Church through ministry of word.

As such, Ruth's sense is of being

called by God
to preach
and to a
subversive ministry
Out of order

Justice is my drum
Social issues
politics

Ruth's words resonate with the idea that "because God is who God is, there must be liberation and transformation, and the re-establishment of equity, a community in which all attend to all" (Brueggemann, 2011:26). The connection with Ruth's sense of being called first to preach and then to this subversive ministry bringing justice and social issues to the fore is striking in that Brueggemann's words are written particularly about the art of preaching. Preaching is only one way in which Readers inhabit this ministry, but for Ruth it is key and is the specific calling through which she is able to communicate issues of justice and respond to her sense of selving.

Justice, teaching, home-making, evangelism, ministry of word as music. These are all "very personal" (Monica) expressions of what has been shown to be a ministry to which some common qualities and skills can be applied. I can honour the understanding shared with me by those who participated in this research but I cannot write in detail about each one. There are tensions inherent in each of these expressions of selving. What is desired and experienced as a vocational call is not always what it is possible to express or live out in practice. It is not my intention to attempt to overcome these tensions and contradictions, merely to acknowledge them. Offering hospitality in the 21st century is beset by practicalities around issues of safeguarding and safekeeping. Being called to preach with a heart for justice issues may bring the preacher into tension and conflict with members of congregations and church establishments. But "Christianity begins in contradictions, in the painful effort to live with the baffling plurality and diversity of God's manifested life - law and gospel, judgement and grace, the crucified Son crying to the Father" (Williams, 1990:182).

My own expression of selving also contains an element of discord and tension. Conducting this has led to growth and development in experience and understanding that stands apart from much of the data gathered. It is for this reason that I consider it relevant and important to include this material in this stanza. As a co-participant in the research process my own story unfolded alongside those of others. As the person responsible for putting this research into practice, and wanting to enter the performance stage of this research with as great a level of transparency as possible, it is my belief that my response will benefit from a short auto-ethnographic study of my sense of selving as it relates to my professional practice. This writing is intentionally personal and confessional in nature.

The insights gained have drawn my attention to my desire for each person to experience a permissive and liberative learning environment in order that they might be equipped to develop and flourish in areas that are not necessarily being shared by others. If it is possible for a physical landscape to be 'unserved' as was the one from which the poplars of the poem were violently removed, I would suggest that it is also possible for the personal landscape of those in ministry to be 'unserved' by careless or

excessively constraining or controlling training methods which do not allow candidates or those in ongoing education within their ministry to flourish and to identify that about which they can say “what I do is me: for that I came” (Hopkins: *As Kingfishers Catch Fire*). For some the progression through selection, training, licensing and ongoing ministerial formation has been one which has led “to an ever increasing sense of purpose” (Smith, 2016:65). For others, however, this has not been the case. The confusion and eventual move from lay ministry to ordination of some may be interpreted as an institutional inability to accept and utilise those whose sense of vocation is lay leading to a pragmatic need to be ordained which may be an ‘unselving’ of sorts when the need is because of legal complexities and to do with “the role and how people perceive you” rather than any sense of inner call or need to be ordained (Sylvia in Rowling and Gooder, 2011:130). Anecdotally I am aware of many Sylvias in ordained ministry. This project has become intrinsically linked with my ministry and my own sense of ‘selving’. It is my desire to teach in a way that liberates those in training and in ministry to speak with authenticity and confidence to an institution, the Church of England, that does not always seem to have ways of hearing. The literature being considered in the next section of this chapter informs my growing understanding but inevitably also relates to the outworking of the research as it might influence learning and formation as this, too, is my own expression of my ministerial vocation.

Further literature

Readers are increasingly being called to have a world facing ministry. The most recent selection and formation guidelines (2014) state that at licensing Readers should be able to “engage in mission, defend the gospel effectively... both inside and outside the church, interact and communicate well with a diverse range of people both inside and outside the church, inspire others to fulfil their vocation in the world and the church, understand the CoE’s role and opportunities for Christian ministry and mission to the world, reflect theologically on the ministry and mission of the church in relation to their experience in and of the world”. In addition, in his sermon at the 150th celebration of Reader ministry service in May 2016, Bishop Robert, Chair of the Reader Governing Body, drew attention to the fact that when the office of Reader was reestablished in 1866 “some general churchy duties were envisaged, but the key to understanding this new office was the reading of ‘prayers and Holy Scripture and explaining the same’ in the contexts outside the normal worshipping life of the parish churches”. Observing that Readers have “drifted, willingly for the most part, into the multiple roles of general ecclesiastical factotum, eucharistic minister, often churchwarden, priest’s assistant, omnipresent helper” he concludes that “that can’t be right”, going on to say that a Reader should be a person “who can bring God into the conversation with people who are searching and with those who have lost their way. Being a theologian in a secular culture” (Paterson, 2016). An approach to ministry that takes into account the public theology agenda “must attend” to three key factors: “i) Realities of economic growth, political economy ii) Human dimensions in terms of marginalisation iii) Church as

implicated in changing fortunes of urban life” (Atherton et al., 2005:63), all of which point ministry in the direction of the world. Readers following this call are unlikely to be involved in the kind of social and economic issues, human marginalisation and social change that was being addressed by the liberation theology of Latin America in the last century. They may, however, be faced with rural or urban poverty and oppressive behaviour in the workplace, their communities or even the church which they, as lay ministers of word, are called to challenge.

Both liberation theology and feminist theology have had an influence on my embodied understanding of ministry. Not only has my own ministry been greatly influenced by these works but the shape of this professional doctorate necessarily exhibits some of the characteristics of liberation theology which “begins and ends with praxis” (Bennett, 2007:39). This link in itself would not be sufficient to allow me to draw on liberation theology in relation to this work which is based in practical theology. Liberation theology has its roots in Marxism. Its praxis is “in solidarity with the poor and oppressed and has an intention of bringing liberation and humanisation though radical, transformative social and political change” (Bennett, 2007:41). I cannot make such claims for this research, but it is my intention that the move from practice to theory and back to practice intrinsic in the professional doctorate will offer more than professional reflective practice with reference to the Christian tradition with the potential to become “an instrument of conservative political and religious ends - serving the conservative ends of personal advancement and meeting targets ... and the organisational ends of efficiency and enhancement of the existing social, political and economic status quo” (Bennett, 2007:41). It is these characteristics of target setting and outcome measures that I was attempting to challenge when I first asked the questions that led to this research project (paper 1 appendix 1 p156). My desire has always been to give voice to those (in this case Readers) who do not feel they have a voice. I may not be involved in radical political action but I am challenging the institutional status quo and attempting to enable those who know what it feels like to be voiceless in a large institution, albeit a Christian one, to have the self-awareness, self-confidence and theological understanding to work for the liberation of those amongst whom they minister. The contexts in which people find themselves captive will vary, but my own epistemological starting point has more in common with liberation theology than it does with a conservative interpretation of pastoral theology and theological reflection.

Writers who have influenced my own formation in recent years are those who have challenged me to own this ministry of giving voice to the voiceless, to offer words that liberate and heal, and to challenge hierarchical expressions of ministry particularly within the Anglican church. These writers are predominantly based in feminist theology. I have to thank Ian McIntosh, my doctoral supervisor, for refusing to allow me to ignore the feminist aspect of this research. My understanding of feminist theology was

outdated and prejudiced. It took me a long time to hear, and accept, that feminist theology in the 21st century does not belong to the Christian feminist world of the 1980s where my own rejection of the concepts belonged. My understanding was “caught between the stereotypes” of secular feminists as “alarmingly aggressive women with strange haircuts and dungarees, who don’t like men” and Christians who “are, at their best, well-meaning but rather ineffectual characters who can be left to their own pious devices, and, at their worst willing women to be subservient to a jealous, male dictator God” (Slee, 1988). Reluctantly at first, but with a growing excitement and sense of recognition, I have been challenged to leave my fearful and prejudiced position behind. I now recognise that if I am to enable others to express their own sense of unique identity, to find their own voice and to experience the growth and healing that has been mine as a result of this research, I must acknowledge myself as the feminist poetic practical theologian that I have become and must develop that understanding in order that the focus of such insights might be towards the ongoing formation of students and those in ministry and not simply about my own self-awareness and self-confidence.

As someone whose engagement with the world of feminism, at least at times, “as a movement seeking to put an end to all forms of patriarchal or sexist power” (Moi, 1986) Kristeva has had a significant influence on the work of many. Her concepts of language and its use and power are of particular interest in the context of this research and my own history with my emphasis on language-based ministry. Kristeva takes a Kleinian expansion of Freud’s theories and poses an argument for prelinguistic ‘drives’ in which we “find the principles of metonymy and metaphor indissociable from the drive economy underlying them” (1986:96). She states that “all these various processes and relations, anterior to sign and syntax, have just been identified from a genetic perspective as previous and necessary to the acquisition of language, but not identical to language” (1986:96). Kristeva was writing about the pre-linguistic drives that are, before spoken language has become a physical possibility for a child, being embodied and not only forming the basis on which language will be built but also being embodied in their own right. At the same time Gadamer was considering the role of language in hermeneutics. Whilst not a feminist writer, his work is significant in my journey towards an understanding of my own expression of serving through ministry of word. His writing emphasises the relationship between written and spoken language. “The sign language of writing refers to the actual language of speech” (Gadamer, 2004:394). Gadamer argues that, unlike the spoken word which “interprets itself to an astonishing degree, by the manner of speaking, the tone of voice, the tempo, and so on, and also by the circumstances in which it is spoken” (Gadamer, 2004:395), the written word can only be interpreted by turning the signs and symbols back to speech. I have become more aware of the way in which spoken language is a key part of my own ministry, and has informed the recording of data in this research, in a way that is intended to enlighten and liberate.

Kristeva and Gadamer were writing at the time when I was beginning speech and language therapy studies. In their work I find my 'lives' converging. The linguistic studies involved in my speech and language therapy training and career join with my counselling knowledge and understanding and inform my theological perspectives in a way that unites and in some way defines me. The importance of spoken language in all of our lives, the necessity to record language in written form (particularly in academic contexts) with all of the inherent potential for misinterpretation of the meaning of the words and a growing awareness of the significance of the prelinguistic years have formed my thinking over the past four decades. In Galvin and Todres' work about the embodied knowing I found a method through which it has been possible to articulate a way of knowing that integrates different aspects of my own life with the research and the thesis as a whole. Gadamer's work has enabled me to approach the words through which the embodied knowing is expressed in a way that seeks to find that which "is meaningful in it (which) captivates us just as the beautiful captivates us" (Gadamer, 2004:484). This captivating meaning results in a personal acknowledgment of the importance of language in my own life - language that seeks to heal, to enlighten and to empower. Kristeva helps me to understand this, too, in its intuitive, deeply engrained, embodied, pre-linguistic forms as poetic understanding.

The themes of this research and the method of making meaning from the data have regularly been expressed in terms of embodiment. Asking people to consider who they are as ministers of word, reflecting on how that ministry is lived out and offers space in which others may be enabled to gain awareness of the closeness of the divine and then responding to what they said by utilising embodied forms of knowing have led back to my own understanding of ministry in relation to the theological theme of incarnation. "The Word became flesh and lived among us" (John 1:14, NRSV). Until recently I have struggled to express my own response to a call to incarnate my faith. As a lay person I sometimes sense a distancing from the language of incarnational faith as this language is so often used of priestly ministry. As a woman I sense a distancing from the language of incarnational faith as this concept is often referring to a way of incarnating Christ, as in Jesus, and Jesus was a man. Slee's investigation of the concept of Christa, the female expression of the Christ, has been significant in my ability to refer to my own ministry as being one of embodiment, of incarnational living in a way that allows me to own my faith, my vocation and my gender fully for the first time (Slee, 2011). In particular her search for an image that challenges the existing portrayals of Christa as always on the cross or suffering but never risen challenges me to redress my own gender specific, and generational, self-understanding (my sense of selfing) which has often not allowed me to move beyond a self-sacrificing image of self and ministry. Like Monk Kidd, much of my life has been spent "trying to live up to the stereotypical formula of what a woman should be - the Good Christian Woman, the Good Wife, the Good Mother, the Good Daughter" (Monk Kidd, 1996:13). By living by

such limiting standards, I have often not allowed myself to identify with all that is adult woman in me. I have come to acknowledge a disunity between my intention of giving voice to, and liberation for, others and my expectations for myself as a Christian woman. I could identify with the pain-filled, sacrificial Christa but the risen Christa has challenged me more deeply. This acknowledgment has led me to a point where this experience can be “actively appropriated, consciously owned, linguistically encoded” and “can become a kind of revolutionary force” (Slee, 2004b:107). This, in turn, gives me confidence to encourage others to find their own sense of identity and calling in a way that does not fear the “outrageous, audacious, courageous and wilful” aspects of that calling (Slee, 2011:36). Not only has this changed my self-image but has allowed me to acknowledge a significantly more radical image of the God who calls people to this ministry - and who calls me to a ministry of oversight and education which will inform and influence others.

The irony is not lost on me that this learning began with, has been accessed through, and is framed by, the concepts of the priest poet Hopkins for whom it has been claimed “male sexuality is not just analogically but actually the essence of literary power” (Gilbert and Guber, 2000:4). But that is the wonder and power of the poetic process that such a person’s work has led me to a deeper understanding which has opened up new horizons and enabled me to “re-vision the tradition” within which I am working (Walton, 2014c:139). This particular concept, selving, being me, crying out ‘for this I came’ (Hopkins) leads me to find myself desiring to live in a way that embodies the Christ in an uncompromised, unapologetic way. I glimpse this in myself from time to time. While I have no desire for my emphasis on feminist theology to encapsulate ideas of gender dualism I do need to acknowledge that I am a woman and can only embody my faith as a woman. I have lived much of my life attempting to ignore, the androcentric culture in which I have grown up. If “a consequence of androcentrism is that women are systematically excluded and obliterated from historical traditions and contemporary thought-forms, and thus rendered invisible to themselves and others” (Slee, 2003:4) I am simply opening my eyes to the dualism that already exists and hoping by being aware and honest to challenge and change this culture where it affects theological education and formation for ministry.

This research has not been about or for women but it has been research conducted by a woman. It has not been aimed specifically at understandings of oppression, but it has gained an understanding of a group of people who often feel they have no voice in the structures of the Anglican church as lay ministers of word in a world that, intentionally or not, gives weighting to ordained sacramental ministers’ voices. This thesis is an attempt to offer a different way of speaking of the theology of ministry of word that will shape the future of those in training for, and the practice of, Reader ministry.

Language about God does not only *reflect* our deepest convictions; it also *shapes* thought and experience. The way in which we speak

about God has a profound, if mysterious, impact upon our understanding of and attitudes towards our own humanity and that of our neighbours, and shapes behaviour in powerful and subtle ways (Slee, 2003:25).

As such, bringing my own rather new-found feminist language into the understanding of lay ministry has the potential to shape the way in which student Readers understand their own humanity, that of their neighbours and the resultant behaviour in the practice of their own ministry.

With some shared roots, feminist and liberation theologies allow me to express the way in which this desire to liberate might become practical. I have, as noted earlier, relied on the work of a male poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, in establishing the conceptual framework upon which to build a formation programme for ministry of word. I am challenged by Walton (2007:167) when she says that “women’s literature can be strategically placed in opposition to the paternal authority of religious tradition, and this creative move has been of decisive significance in the development of feminist theology”. However, I wish to avoid the gender polarisation that this statement seems to inhabit. By taking Hopkins’ concepts and inhabiting them with feminist, liberative, non-gendered vocational language I hope that both men and women might benefit from this framework. I do take Walton’s challenge, though, to bring in more feminine poetic voices as the teaching of this formational and ongoing education programme takes shape.

Reflexive response

This stanza has, by its very nature, been reflexive throughout. There is one additional insight, though, that needs to be acknowledged as not only influencing this research, but as playing a significant role in my expression of my understanding of my vocation for many years.

A moment of revelation as I considered this topic reminded me of a personal experience of political left-wing feminism in an inner city area in the 1980s. This small group of women with good intentions but little experience of the culture in which they were working created a volatile situation for a vulnerable group of women. The events took place in an urban area of a large city. Sessions were established which taught women how to recognise domestic abuse, encouraged women to consider themselves equal to their husbands and to break away from the ‘unacceptable’ norms of family life. Awareness was raised and the project seemed to be successful. However, the suicide rate amongst young women in the area increased significantly. Investigations concluded that while the project had successfully raised awareness that the previously accepted cultural practices were abusive, it had not provided any way for these newly enlightened women to change the conditions in which they still had to live. Once they

had identified themselves as victims with no way of escaping the behaviour patterns the women's situations became intolerable and significant numbers were taking their own lives as their only perceived escape route. Remembering this event and acknowledging its impact on me has helped me to recognise why I was initially resistant to exploring the work of liberation and feminist theologians. It has also led me to an understanding of a deeply embodied, and unacknowledged, fear that has lived with me; the fear is that if I help others to consider their ministry from the perspective of liberation and empowerment someone might die. I am not here speaking of physical death, but I am concerned that someone who is content with a particular expression of ministry may, having given thought to the serving aspects of a formation framework, consider this to be insufficient and to desire a more fulfilling expression of ministry. Working in an unsupportive parish and with no way of finding such a ministry may lead to dissatisfaction, a sense of being stuck and spiritual or emotional dis-ease or death and the heartache of unserving. This has been my unspoken fear. It is not a reason to ignore all that I have written about my sense of serving in my ministry. It is not a reason for limiting expectations of training or development of ministry of word. It is, though, a very significant personal lesson which needs to remain in my consciousness so that I do not allow it to limit all that this research has to offer and all that those who took part in it have given of themselves.

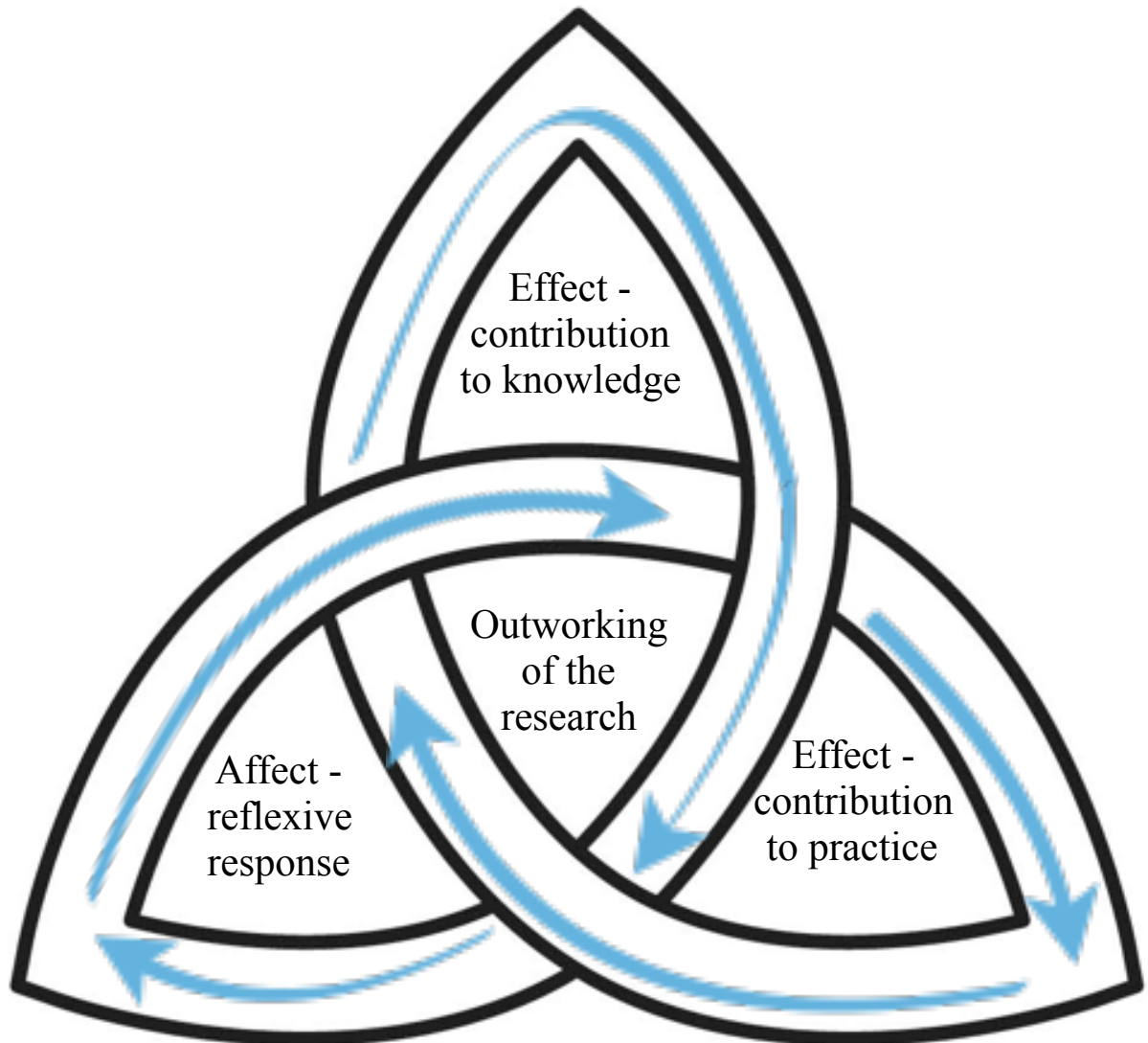
Critique

This stanza has led me to think critically about the research as a whole. I have been very careful to write in a way that is authentic and which honours the subject matter and participant contributions throughout. The structure of the thesis is intentionally congruent with the content. This structure along with the method of recording data from the interviews and of meaning-making challenges some of the norms of doctoral theses and contributes to the originality of the work, offering new insights into combining poetic research analysis and presentation with the field of pastoral theology in a way that informs professional practice.

However, my own identity as a researcher has developed significantly as a result of this project. My intention from the start was that the research would liberate and empower those who took part and those whose ministries were potentially influenced and enlightened by the findings. As such it is my opinion that the research has been a success. Had I started from where I have finished, though, I would have been much more alert to the possible influence of feminist research methods in my initial planning. Slee (2004:44-45) outlines three phases in the debate about feminist research in social sciences between the 1960s and the 1990s; the critical stage, the constructivist phase and finally the stage "of diversification and self-reflective critical sophistication" (Slee, 2004:45). According to Slee, feminist research will exhibit certain qualities. It will listen and look for difference, will use non-oppressive research methods with the intention of liberating and empowering those who take part and will practise reflexivity (Slee,

2004:47-50). Whilst I was not consciously aware of locating this research within a feminist framework, I would argue that the principles being applied as I considered its design were congruent with these criteria. The research has set out to empower those who took part. By using an unstructured interview and co-operative research method in a reflexive way I was intentionally encouraging all participants to “contribute significantly to the description and analysis” of the topic (Opie, 1992:64). By utilising Heron’s form of co-operative inquiry my intention was also to conduct research that had the potential for “an in-built therapeutic dimension to the process which I would also characterise as empowering” (Opie, 1992:64). Identifying the praxis element of research as another characteristic of feminist methodologies, Opie promotes the “praxis/empowerment/reciprocity paradigm” (Opie, 1992:65). I have, throughout this research, been aware of the first two elements of this paradigm. If I am to put my learning from this process into practice I now need to concentrate on the element of reciprocity. To fulfil the feminist aims of this research as they have developed in its execution I have to be willing to share not only the information gathering process but also the dissemination and resultant praxis. This then is my challenge; to include others in the ownership of the insights gained and the way in which they will inform Reader formation (both of those in training and those who have been in practice for many years). If I am not willing to give away the power gained by being the author of the thesis I cannot claim that feminism has truly impacted on my own ministry or this research.

Section 3
The Performance



“We cannot assume that our speech is either a leisure activity with no connection to its environment or a handy means of cataloguing ready-made objects; it is something shaped by the fact of the body’s participation in the ‘action’ of the world. And if it is at some level shaped in this way, its own ways of shaping the environment through representation will show the traces of what has been received from that environment.”

(Williams, 2014:135)

Introducing the section

This research set out to be **an exploration of the possibility of a theopoetic paradigm for ministry of word and its influence on formation for Reader ministry.** The research was conducted within the definition of theopoetics as **that which crafts and re-crafts understanding of the divine from existing language, fully engages with everyday experiences and which subverts attempts to confine theology to thought processes.**

As a result of the exploration, it is my conclusion that it is possible to construct a theopoetic paradigm for ministry of word. In section 2 of the thesis I have examined the research findings and relevant literature which provide the basis for such a paradigm. Presenting the research findings in relation to Hopkins' concepts of inscape, instress and selving I have shown that ministry of word can be expressed in theopoetic terms. However, as a poem's impact is in its performance, so the impact of the research findings, and their influence on formation for Reader ministry, will be in the outworking (the performance) of that theopoetic paradigm. In the development of Hopkins' concepts of inscape, instress and selving I express a theopoetic paradigm that not only provides a theoretical framework for such an understanding but which can also find application in the initial formational training of Reader students and the ongoing ministerial education of those in licensed ministry. This section of the thesis will consider ways in which the findings of the research, presented in section 2, can be interpreted to provide theological and practical rationales on which training and continuing ministerial development programmes might be based.

Poetry's performative power is identified as being that which "interrogates, inspires, convicts and inflames the hearts of the faithful" (Pryce, 2014a:96). As such the poem is both effective; "causing something to happen" (Concise Oxford Dictionary) and affective; "bringing about a personal response of feeling, emotion or desire" (Concise Oxford Dictionary). In this section the outworking of the research is presented in terms of its effect and affect. Effect is taken to be the contribution made to knowledge and practice. The contribution made to knowledge is explored in relation to theological understanding and research methods. The contribution to practice returns to my professional context and I critically explore the potential for using poetry as a pedagogical tool. Affect is presented in the form of a reflexive response to the work relating my own learning from the research; the process, findings and application. This learning has been both personal and professional and impacts on my understanding of who I am as a created and creative being, how I am called to embody that nature in my own ministry and the transformation that has taken place in my own life as well as my sense of calling to a ministry of transformation in the lives of others.

In this section I present my interpretation of the findings as I consider the theopoetic paradigm's **influence on formation for Reader ministry**. Now that the material has been presented and further literature engaged with it is necessary for me to step out of the co-researcher/participant role. In order that the material can confidently make its contribution to knowledge and practice I will now interpret and develop the themes from the perspective of the researcher/practitioner.

Effect - Contribution to knowledge

This research has focused on the sense of identity of Readers in lay ministry. I have offered new ways of expressing a sense of Reader identity and provided a theological framework within which those training and continuing to resource Readers in their ministerial formation might work. Very little has been written about the ministry of Readers, and what has been written concentrates on ministerial activities and tasks.⁴ This research by contrast contributes to qualitative understanding of the *nature* of Reader ministry, as it is practised and experienced by a small group of contemporary Readers. Two particular areas in which the research contributes to knowledge are in its theological insights and its development of research methods.

Contribution to theological understanding

I term the theology that has emerged theopoetic, feminist and pastoral. According to Whipp, "pastoral theology is the study of how and why Christians care" (2013:1). The theological model presented in this thesis is pastoral in that it is a consideration of how and why some Christians express their caring in a formal, licensed ministry of word by becoming Readers in the Church of England. The Readers who shared with me in the empirical stages of the research identified a sense of calling, of being in some way created for this ministry and of offering creativity in their handling and crafting of words. The research process as well as the content of the data engaged with embodied experience and responses. The intention throughout was to enable students and Readers and, through their ministry those who they serve, to grow in their understanding of God and themselves and to be liberated to express that understanding in ways that may be unique and will certainly be true to personality and experience. As such a theology that has characteristics of creation, incarnation and transformation has emerged. In its desire to liberate, to hear the voices of those who are rarely heard and to subvert attempts to confine theology to thought processes, this theological expression is both theopoetic and feminist in nature. In its **refusal to be confined to thought processes**, this theology is also intrinsically practical.

⁴Some of the findings were incorporated into a chapter of a book published to celebrate the 150th anniversary of modern Reader ministry, *Instruments of Christ's Love* (Tovey et al., 2016) brings an addition to the very small corpus of work available to those considering Reader ministry.

The Christian understanding of God as Trinity, in addition to informing the theological emphasis of this work, offers a way of focusing on aspects of formation for ministry. Importantly the Christian Trinitarian view of God is relational. As is indicated by the adoption of the triquetra celtic knot as a symbol for the contextual framework of this research, and as the framework for each section of the thesis, the paradigm for ministry of word emerging from the research findings is a relational one. A trinitarian model of ministry that is creative, incarnational and transformative was the beginning of my understanding. However, reading further and considering the wisdom literature and the place that Sophia might have in such a model has developed this thinking further. This does not deny the trinitarian model, but, following the thinking of Johnson, “feminist consciousness subverted it in an irresistible way” (2002:121). What resulted for Johnson was a “theology of the triune God that sets out from the experience of Spirit” (2002:122). It is this thinking that has helped my initial trinitarian theology to develop.

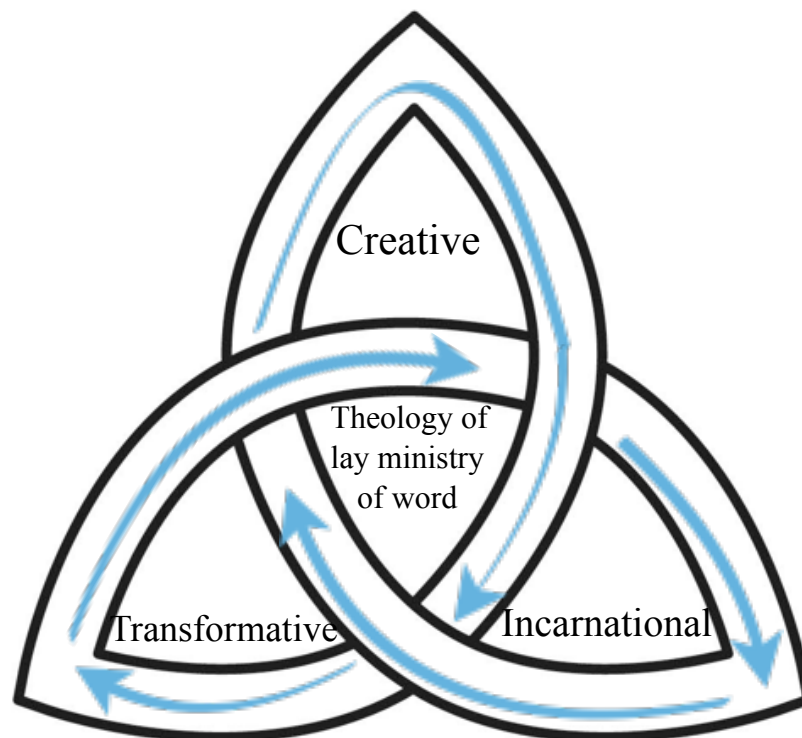
Schüssler Fiorenza asserts that,

when one moves from Jewish Wisdom literature to early Christian writings the figure of Divine Wisdom seems to disappear. Yet a symptomatic reading, which attends to traces and tensions inscribed in the text, can show that a submerged theology of Wisdom, or sophiology, permeates all of Christian Scriptures (1994b:139).

References to Wisdom (Sophia) in the book of Proverbs place her at the heart of creation. She existed before the world was created and she is the first of God’s works. As such “the scriptural tradition of creation theology here receives another dimension with the idea that creation is not simply the act of a solitary male deity” (Johnson, 2002:88). Schüssler Fiorenza also considers early Christian writings and concludes that “it is likely that these early Jesus traditions interpreted the Galilean mission of Jesus as that of Divine Sophia because Jesus of Nazareth understood himself as messenger and child of Sophia” (1994b: 140). In the apocryphal book of Sirach Sophia’s relationship with those who love her is described in great detail. These references to Sophia are echoed in Jesus’ teaching in a way that seems to affirm Schüssler Fiorenza’s thinking. For example, wearing Sophia’s yoke is described as being a way to “receive instruction; it is to be found close by” (Sir. 51:26). Taking Jesus’ yoke is said to be the way to learn from him (Matt. 11:29). In Sophia, we are introduced to one who is present at the creation of the world and who has the power to re-create: “while remaining in herself, she renews all things” (Wisdom 7:27a). We meet one who lives among God’s people: “in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God, and prophets” (Wisdom 7:27b), and who is ultimately incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. In addition, human beings were “saved by wisdom” (Wisdom 9:18). Through Moses, Sophia led the people from bondage to freedom and in Jesus she has the power to save. Through her, the author of the Book

of Wisdom is enriching the image of God through a “personalisation of divine influence in the world” (Johnson, 2002:92).

Giving due consideration to the Wisdom literature, written before the adoption of Logos in place of Sophia, allows ministry based on the prologue to John’s gospel to develop into a ministry of wisdom, not just a ministry of word - a Sophia ministry. Still a ministry that is incarnational, creative (and re-creative) and transformative but, in addition, one that acknowledges the way in which “in the post biblical period Sophia and Logos were seen as equivalent expressions of the one outreaching power and saving presence of God” (Johnson, 2002:99).



Incarnational

Research findings evidence a significant emphasis on an incarnational understanding of ministry. The nature of being was one aspect of inscape considered in detail in section 2. With the performative potential of the findings in mind the theological implications of a sense of being are significant. Research participant Ruth said “what I do is who I am”, indicating the importance of an understanding of “who I am” to those who will be, or already are, “doing” ministerial tasks. This way of being can only be experienced as those who are embodied. Johnson (2002:168) claims that “the inner dynamic of the doctrine of incarnation sounds a ringing affirmation of the cherished feminist value of bodiless, even for God”. Her claim is that Jesus knew himself to be a prophet of Sophia. This provides us with an image of the incarnate Christ which is

unlike the images of Jesus as *logos*; with its “long association with androcentric theology and imperialistic ecclesial history” (Johnson, 2002:166). In Johnson’s words,

In its etymological and historical context, the early Christian confession that Jesus is the Christ means precisely this, that he is the Messiah, the anointed one, the one anointed by the Spirit. Through his human history the Spirit who pervades the universe becomes concretely present in a small bit of it; Sophia pitches her tent in the midst of the world; the Shekinah dwells among the suffering people in a new way (2002:150).

To understand Jesus through the person of Sophia is to know One who is “people loving; her light shines everywhere, and those whom she makes to be friends of God and prophets are found throughout the wide world” (Johnson, 2002:166). In addition, to know Jesus in this way is to understand more fully a God in whom there is “no longer male and female” (Gal. 3:29).

In the light of this understanding of incarnation, ministry is challenged to be inclusive. To know oneself is important as the ability to minister to all and to know one’s own strengths and weaknesses is developed.

If we do not know ourselves - how can we freely give ourselves to others and to God? It is like giving someone a parcel all wrapped up, saying, “Here you are, take it, I give it,” but we do not know what is in the parcel. Most times we are afraid there is nothing much in it anyway. We pretend, perhaps, that the receiver will tell us what he/she found inside. God knows, but that is not enough. The measure of self knowledge involved in our giving is also the measure of love and trust that we are able to share. God receives and loves us all the more for our self knowledge. When we don’t know or understand ourselves our act of giving is clouded by ignorance and blindness. We are not free either to accept and receive the truth that is found in others. We build relationships which are not free nor loving because they are not based on truth and I have, therefore, a real responsibility to get to know myself - why and how I act, and how I can learn to grow, and become a whole and free person. I can only give that which I first know and claim as mine to give.

Anything else is cheating! (Gateley, 1990:27).

This kind of self-knowing is demanding. It requires an honest examination of all that is within (inscape) and a **full engagement with everyday experiences**. As the research findings indicate, for Readers, it also requires an understanding of a theology and ecclesiology of what it is to be lay.

Readers lives and ministries are embodied in layness. It is this identity that places Readers in the midst of everyday life. This is who Readers are and it is from this place of identity that Readers do what they do. It has been suggested that, in relation to the role of the Reader as lay minister, "the past can inform the future" (Tovey 2016:78). This past is recorded in historical accounts of Reader ministry from around the world which go back even earlier than the date of 1866 which is accepted as the beginning of Reader ministry as we know it today in the Church in England. These early Readers were local lay people who were involved in teaching and translating the bible and religious works. They were people whose "local roots enabled them also to be involved in evangelization" (Tovey, 2016:92). The understanding of everyday life as it was lived by the local community was seen as important to the ministry of these early Readers. "This is church growth from the roots upwards". (Tovey, 2016:92). In the same way today the local, lay, nature of the Reader allows for an engagement with, and understanding of, local communities that can deeply enrich ministry. It is the world of work and community that is often the primary day to day location in which people exercising the ministry of Reader live their lives. In keeping with the working definition of theopoetics, this location allows for significant engagement with 'everyday experiences'. In her work on Ruskin giving consideration to what this 19th century art critic, social thinker and philanthropist has to offer to pastoral theology, Bennett says:

The painter who will attain to the great and beautiful must do so through the faith that gives courage to gaze without shrinking into the darkness. Pity is the refusal to turn away from human misery; more, it is the courage and commitment to 'stoop to the horror' and to engage with the social evils which create that human misery (Bennett, 2011:189).

Going on to say "here is a man who teaches us to see: to see with pity and without fear, and to craft what we see into words and images which do work in the public realm" Bennett asks "How might we learn to do practical theology better by attending to such a man?" (2001:190). My version of this question would be to ask how might we learn to put our theology into practice in lay ministry better by attending to such a man? It should be noted at this point that not only might Ruskin's emphasis on attentive, courageous looking influence pastoral theologians and practitioners today, but his influence on Hopkins was significant. The evidence of Ruskin's influence on Hopkins was, according to Ballinger, all over Hopkins' study. "Seeing was Ruskin's first imperative. The aesthete must learn, above all, how to see". (Ballinger, 2000:43). Hopkins takes this concept and, through the influences of Ignatius and Scotus it becomes a theological, spiritual and philosophical concept expressed in two of the terms upon which the 'performance' stage of this research is conceptualised; 'inscape' and 'instress'. Thus my question about Ruskin's influence already begins to be answered. Through his impact on Hopkins he has influenced this research. Through his

influence on this research he has contributed to the resultant developments in knowledge and practice.

Hopkins' observations of nature were the source of our understanding of inscape. I have argued, along with Gardner, Buechner and Merton that it is valid to develop an application of his concepts which includes humans. There is great potential for close observation of personal inscape to bring about self-awareness and understanding. In addition to poets and artists, spiritual writers have encouraged "awareness" (deMello, 1990) and "coming to attention" (Frost, 1998). Being alert to the presence of God in everyday activities, people and places is at the heart of many expressions of spirituality as well as being at the heart of the poetic process. Inscape can only be recognised by paying close attention which results in the observer being aware of the instress, the feelings and recognition of the creator, engendered by the object being observed.

We see God's grace revealed in movies, books, stories, good food and drink, sport and hobbies, cooking, small talk, raising kids, shared laughter, and strong coffee. And for this we are eternally grateful. Such gratitude sets us free from using others as objects. It liberates us from codependent, needy relationships. If your eyes are wide open you'll know that the task of the living person is to praise God (Frost, 1998:164).

Of this kind of attentiveness Frost says "try it as you take the trash out. Try it when you take up a pen to write" (1998:197). To develop this quality of attentiveness to the everyday things of life in those exercising a lay ministry of word is to encourage a poetic approach to the whole of life which, I believe, will enhance all aspects of ministry and particularly the experience of instress, interpersonal sacred space, resulting from this close attention and gratitude. This kind of close attention then serves to take the focus of those in ministry away from the self - inscape which has brought about self-awareness and of the image of God in the self - to focus on the other.

A theopoetic paradigm for ministry of word, therefore, challenges practitioners to experience a deepening of engagement with all that makes up everyday life; a 'close looking' in order that ministerial practice might be lived out by those who have the "courage to gaze without shrinking into the darkness" (Bennett, 2011:189).

Creative

Taking words, through their careful use **crafting and re-crafting understanding of the divine**, is the focus of the teaching and preaching aspect of Reader ministry; the beauty of "a precious stone/crafted offering/ light/skill/value" (research participant Leo

Hines). This creativity is lived out by people who speak of playing with words and telling stories.

Theology of word-play

Seeing play as a transformative way of knowing, Hamman argues, can help us “to ‘toy’ with, and discover, God’s shalom” (2012:49). Ministerial formation can appropriately be thought of as a very serious process but in Jesus ministry we see someone who responded to many opportunities to play and to exemplify God’s shalom. Time with friends, eating and partying (the first record of a miracle is of Jesus at a wedding and the resultant quantities of wine) were surely used to encourage enjoyment and play. Literature relating to the skills involved in homiletics informed the topic of interest in the previous section of the thesis (pp.90-93). In this section I develop the research theme of playing with words by examining some of the theological and psychological works about play.

In her book on supervision in ministry, Ward encourages the creation of a space to play. Not only is she referring to a physical space in which playfulness can be developed but also a relational ‘space’ within the supervisory relationship. “Play involves the engagement with others, often initially with objects like toys and teddy bears, and then increasingly with people. Play brings together the imaginative life of the child with a growing sense of the reality of the world” (Ward, 2005:89). Play as a skill in ministry might be developed with these words in mind. The playfulness in preparing a sermon, for example, begins with engagement with the text (an other). It could be transformative to encourage ministers of word to imaginatively bring together the ‘other’ of the text with the ‘other’ of those who will hear the sermon, playing with the words either aloud or on the page, changing meaning by changing not only the words but also the inflection, speed, repetition, rhythm and maybe even incorporating elements of rhyme and alliteration. This would involve encouraging ministers to consciously think about the poetic nature of the words that are carrying the theological message, to enjoy the playfully creative process of crafting and then to embody those words in the moment and space of the deliverer/hearer relationship, intending not only to convey information but to embody that information within a space where play is encouraged. I consider this to be a trinitarian model of play; play that is creative, embodied and transformative.

Winnicott claims that “it is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self” (1971:54). If there is any truth in this statement it is essential that the work on development of self understanding comes to fruition through encouragement to play. As this process takes place it will also be informative to consider the thought that

play is immensely exciting. It is exciting not primarily because the instincts are involved, be it understood! The thing about playing is always the precariousness of the interplay of personal psychic reality and the experience of control of actual objects. This is the precariousness of magic itself, magic that arises in intimacy, in a relationship that is being found to be reliable (Winnicott, 1971:45).

Some experiences of play, however, are not healthy ones; the “precariousness of the interplay” leads to unbalanced relationships. Life in the playground can often be experienced in terms of exclusion and bullying. For many this has also been their experience of the kind of play found in the church. To encourage those in ministry to understand their own experiences of damaging play and then to be aware of similar potential damage in the lives of those among whom they minister has the potential for healing and transformation. Some research participants, while sure of their own vocation, expressed a sense of exclusion from the world of ordained ministry. Ruth’s way of expressing this was to say “Defined by what I can’t do/What I am excluded from offering”.

It is this world of ordained ministry, in our culture until recently predominantly white, male and middle class, that dominates the language of formation for ministry. It is from this world that those with power and influence in the Church of England come. While this is changing slowly, it is still the model that has formed much of the thinking of the institution of the church and therefore of those in ministerial education. It is this world that leaves many with a sense of vocation to lay ministry feeling excluded and misunderstood. If Ward is correct in saying that “to incorporate a sense of alienation within ourselves is to recognise the experience of being alien in community today, where ‘community’ can be little more than a romantic myth” (2005:102) then encouraging honest expressions of any feelings of alienation in those in ministry will begin to raise awareness and understanding of others, to find a voice for themselves and to find the skills to lead others to find their own identity and voice too.

This brings me back to the topic of power; and the need for those who enter ministry to be ever alert to the power held within their role. If play within relationships becomes exciting because of the control held then power is being abused. With insufficient understanding of the underlying relational processes at work, I would argue that ministry can become dangerous space rather than sacred space. A theopoetic framework that fully engages with everyday experiences and is not afraid to articulate these dangers has the potential to transform ministry through raised awareness, watchful carefulness and sensitive crafting of words that encourage an experience of sacred space and of God’s shalom in any, and potentially all, places and situations.

To re-imagine this aspect of faith within the creativity of God, and particularly within the mothering images of Sophia, is to re-locate many of the common images of human beings' own creativity and playfulness as well as the creative roles of those in ministry. If "God the Father has become an overliteralized metaphor, so monopolising Christian speech about God that the equally legitimate and in some ways even more appropriate symbol of God as mother is eclipsed" (Johnson, 2002:173) then this may not be an easy task. It is however, I would argue, a role that a theopoetic paradigm for ministry is potentially well equipped to attempt to fulfil.

Maternity with its creativity, nurturing, and warmth, its unbounded compassion and concern for justice, its sovereign power that protects, heals, and liberates, its all-embracing immanence, and its recreative energy shapes a new understanding of divine relationally, mystery and liberating intent (Johnson, 2002:185).

Ministry offered with such a model of creativity and love is likely not to abuse power but to align itself with "God the mother (who) rejoices in the world's flourishing, has compassion on its weakness, and pours forth her powerful love to resist what damages or destroys" (Johnson, 2002: 179). In doing so, ministry will have a greater chance of being transformative in nature.

Transformative

These wordsmith skills in turn have the potential to be transformative, offering a secret touch and "sacred space/here and now/and everywhere" (Leo Hines). If this *secret touch* topic that inspired much of the conversation in the research group is to be an intentional component of lay ministry the potentially transformational skill of listening is essential; listening to God, to the world, and to those around us. To consider ourselves to be capable of experiencing the transformative role of the Spirit, and in particular the transformative nature of Sophia, is to locate ministry in a world which becomes in itself "sacrament of divine presence and activity, even if only as a fragile possibility"... because "Spirit is the creator and giver of life, (and) life itself with all its complexities, abundance, threat, misery, and joy becomes a primary mediation of the dialectic of presence and absence in divine mystery" (Johnson, 2002:124). Living and ministering amongst people who experience God's presence and absence offers relational opportunities on a regular basis particularly when we consider the possibility of lives and ministries lived in the power of Spirit-Sophia who is

the source of transforming energy among all creatures. She initiates novelty, instigates change, transforms what is dead into new stretches of life. Fertility is intimately related to her recreative power, as is the attractiveness of sex. It is she who is ultimately playful, fascinating, pure and wise, luring human beings into the depths of love. As mover and encourager of what tends toward stasis, Spirit-Sophia inspires human creativity and joy in the struggle. Wherever

the gift of healing and liberation in however partial a manner reaches the winterised or damaged earth, or peoples crushed by war and injustice, or individual persons weary, harmed, sick, or lost on life's journey, there the new creation in the Spirit is happening (Johnson, 2002:135).

If it is the “secret touch” of this Spirit that ministry of word offers it is essential to be willing to listen to the pain as well as the joy experienced by those among whom ministry is practised. To listen to the feelings as well as the thoughts is a key factors in a ministry that can be identified as theopoetic. Much was written about this aspect of instress in the previous chapter. However, it is important to remember that the kind of listening essential to effective ministry is not simply the learned skill of setting boundaries and time within agreed relationships in order that others might be listened to (Ward, 2005:106). While these relational skills are essential, it is possible for even this to become part of a professional busyness and to be task-focused. Gateley's words about her own ministry as the founder of a mission society offer a warning to all in ministry when she says “I had been very busy and preoccupied with work and traveling, and I knew that I really did need to put aside some time for God. I needed to listen” (2009:30). For most of us our response to the call to listen to God afresh will not involve Gateley's form of retreat which was to spend three months in the Sahara which

is hundreds and hundreds of miles of nothing - of sand just stretching far, far away and disappearing into the sky. There are volcanic areas of large boulders and rocks that have stood in the same place for thousands of years. Lizards dart everywhere. There are tarantulas that hide under rocks. The cockroaches are about five inches in length. The silence is total. I have never experienced such a silence, ever, in my life (Gateley, 2009:32).

Whether or not many will be called to such a creative, incarnational, transformative - “I would never be the the same again” (Gateley, 2009:32) - expression of a desire to renew listening skills, I would suggest that Gateley's experience offers a possible metaphor for the encouragement of listening to God as well as to others as part of formation for ministry. It may be necessary to help those in ministry to identify places of quiet, set apart from everyday life where there are elements of discomfort (metaphorical, if not real, tarantulas and cockroaches) that raise a sense of awareness and take away the temptation to hear God speaking as we have always heard God speaking.

Returning to the poetic and artistic skills of Hopkins and Ruskin, being intentional about the teaching of a poetic attention-giving to detail as part of formation for ministry is an important component in encouraging ministers to understand every aspect of daily lives

as being of theological import and every contact with those amongst whom ministry is practised as being potentially transformational.

Contribution to research methods

The research method intentionally paid attention to somatic responses in the collection, recording and reporting of data and in the reflexivity involved in the research process. In its combination of co-operative research and poetic analysis, the research methods contribute new understanding to the growing corpus of work within the field of practical theology that is incorporating poetic methods into more traditional research methodologies. (Pryce, 2014b; Slee, 2014 and Walton, 2014b).

Much of the research carried out in the field of practical theology over recent years has fallen into the category of inductive research with a particular emphasis on hermeneutic phenomenology (Swinton and Mowat, 2006). Park criticises Swinton and Mowat in their assertion that the epistemological challenges involved in using qualitative research methods in practical theology can be easily overcome. She believes that this challenge is based on the “fundamental assumption of modern science rooted in Cartesian binary thinking that requires one to draw a clear line between the self and the object that one is inspecting” (Park, 2014:2). She goes on to say that “this very dualism lies at the heart of social scientific methodology, even while the qualitative research methodology appears to value subjective knowledge” (Park, 2014:3). There is power in all research. Looking “into the complexity of the lived life” (Park, 2014:2) and then interpreting what is found runs the risk of the researcher being blind to the philosophical and moral power being exerted over the research subjects. Even within Heidegger’s concept of *Dasein* (there-being) which results from his work into being and becoming, according to Park there was the capacity for Heidegger to “fail to reflect on the power differentials between ... *Daseins*”. Of Heidegger’s philosophical work within the Nazi movement she says

when others, who are simply *Dasein*, just as Heidegger was *Dasein*, suffered under the misuse of power by the *Dasein* of the other, it seems that the subjectivity of the suffering *Dasein* did not register as a problem or a challenge to his thinking. Here I take away a lesson to carefully consider the power of knowledge, especially when making the most profound existential or ontological claim (Park, 2014:5).

The co-operative nature of the research which acknowledged group members (Heron, 1996; Heron and Reason, 2001), those who contributed to InterView conversations (Kvale, 1996) and me as co-researchers and co-participants for the empirical part of this research has intentionally taken away the “clear line between the self and the object being inspected” (Park, 2014:2). In its reflexive nature, at every stage, this research has acknowledged that I and the other participants in this project have constantly influenced one another. This, together with the poetic representation of

participants' own words in the form of the found poems (Galvin and Todres, 2009) and the poetic structure of the thesis, has developed understanding of research methodology and methods appropriate to investigating existential questions that impact on the world of pastoral theology which "looks into the complexity of the lived life to care for the relationships and vulnerability in which the divine is present" (Park, 2014:2). It provides a synthesis of methods which constantly address, attempt to be aware of and therefore minimise problems. More than this, the synthesis of methods and the consistency of the methodology contributes a research project that in its entirety embodies the theopoetic theme of its own research outcomes.

Contribution to practice

The poetic processes involved in this research have been enlightening and challenging to me both personally and professionally. Much of my work involves teaching; either formally in classrooms or informally in meetings, conversations or simply by example. It is necessary for me to examine my own practice as a minister of word (a lay theologian) in the light of the research. The personal impact is examined in detail below in the reflexive response to the research. The professional insights are recorded in this section as I consider the impact that this research has had on my own practice and as a result may have on the practice of others. I had, before conducting this research, considered my teaching to be a separate skill set from my creativity. Aligning myself with a theology of creativity, incarnation and transformation does not allow me to continue to hold such a polarised view. It has become necessary for me to reconsider the pedagogical model that frames my professional practice. Formal teaching requires that module specifications and learning outcomes are achieved. Informal teaching is set in the overall framework of a job description and necessary goals and achievements. Within these boundaries, however, I would, as a direct result of the process and findings of this research, argue that for my own teaching practice to be authentic to my values and honouring of my gifts it needs to include poetry and poetic process as one way of achieving the externally moderated aims and objectives. In this section I will therefore examine the possibility of using poetry itself as part of my teaching toolkit.

Using poetry as a pedagogical tool

I want to claim for poetry something more than a kind of epistemological shift, more than just a different way of seeing something. I want to claim that if the seeing differently is successful, there is, to use the jargon, an ontological shift as well. One actually encounters a new and perhaps different reality because of the shift in insight. Poetry can damage your health!

(D'Costa, 2014:173)

One way in which this thesis contributes to both knowledge and practice is in its development of the use of poetics and poetry as a tool throughout the research process. Hopkins' work was first referenced as a result of the study of his poetry in A Level English leading me to recognise a synthesis of the creative, spiritual and critical in myself. It has not been my intention to eschew the academic, but to incorporate all that *crafts understanding of the divine from existing language, fully engages with everyday experiences and which subverts attempts to confine theology to thought processes* (i.e. that which is theopoetic) into every aspect of this research. It is congruent with the aims of this thesis that, in addition to the systematic application of the findings as presented in the previous section of this chapter, there might also be a development of its contribution to practice which considers the place of poetry as a pedagogical tool in the resultant formational programme.

To teach through engagement with poetry accords with the view that poetry often hinges at the margins of certainty, instead affirming complexity and contradiction and the absence of easy answers to difficult and often ultimately incomprehensible realities. By doing this, poetry in the end affirms the human experience and its richly complex currents. And that can be liberating (Forsthoefel, 2014:112).

While the idea expressed by a number of research participants that Readers offer a 'bridge ministry' has its limitations, and potentially polarises church and world or clergy and lay people depending on the elements being joined by the ministerial 'bridge', a more creative use of the metaphor may be to think of the bridge as being that which "hinges at the margins" and to encourage those in such ministry to resist the temptation to "live in a world polarised by moralism which tends to steamroll complexity into tidy categories of "good" and "bad"" (Forsthoefel, 2014:112). In so doing, it would be possible to encourage the formation of ministers who were able to embrace the "richly complex currents" of human experience and to both find and offer liberation through their willingness to acknowledge such complexity in the lives of those to whom they minister. Another dualism that this research seeks to challenge is that of right and wrong. This statement is not intended to negate processes of moral decision-making. It is however a statement of intent that ministry of word is offered into a world that is often complex and uncertain. By utilising poetic research methods, encouraging others' voices to be heard without interpretation and developing a theopoetic paradigm for formational education of those in ministries of word, I am intentionally challenging the extremes of such a dualism. While "the simplicity of black and white categories may provide some with a kind of emotional relief from the hard work of mature awareness, ... it lacks depth and substance" (Forsthoefel, 2014:112). On the other hand

poetry itself may be a form of divination, a means of teaching for the sacred, but also the means whereby we ourselves are searched out

and our lives become the sacred ground in which the holy is discerned (D'Costa et.al., 2014:4)

Poetry as a tool to encourage development of inscape (self-awareness of inner landscape)

Poetry allows us to access something transcendent, real, and true. We feel more ourselves. We feel more “human”, more connected. That point of transcendence converges with a similar trajectory in the religious imagination, where reflection, meditation, song, and ritual take the participant to a realm which opens to ever fuller understanding of what is real, what is true, what is most meaningful, and what is most human (Forsthoefer, 2014:111).

That which is ‘most human’ is what is sought by focusing on the inscape in oneself and others. There are a number of ways in which this might be fulfilled by using poetry as well as poetic processes and understanding as pedagogical tools.

Williams considers the use of poetry as a pedagogical tool from a therapeutic perspective. While formational education is not intended to be therapy, I would argue that there is much to be learned from this therapeutic model in terms of self-awareness and qualities relating to inscape. He suggests that it is possible for poetry to offer students an “experience with a poem that is analogous to psychoanalytic transference and countertransference” (Williams, 2012:55). Readers of poetry, he argues, “are able to receive projections from poems when the poet brings them into the experience that the poem is trying to express.” This allows readers to “develop greater empathy with the writer or speaker of the poem - and thus with others in general” (Williams, 2012:55-56). In this way the poem takes on the role of analyst. On the other hand, it is possible for the poem to take on the role of object encouraging a deeper understanding of the everyday world in which ministry takes place. In this case, the reader is offered a rewarding experience in the external, object world. Such rewards in the realm of language and social relationships encourage further linguistic and social development. This development leads to a better balance between the need for object relations and personal independence. The reader’s relationship to the poem serves the therapeutic purposes of increasing self-awareness and providing renewal, and guiding one toward reparation of self and improved relations with objects in the external world (Williams, 2012:56).

The intention here is clearly therapeutic repair as opposed to developmental formation, but I would argue that the principle behind this method of restoration and repair has much to offer in the formation of those whose ministry will often be involved with people

in situations of disintegration and damage. To have learned skills, through the reading of, and responding to, poetry that allow those in ministry to do what Williams ascribes to the poem which “puts emotions into symbolic forms of metaphor and linguistic image and gives them back to the reader so that they may become conscious, modifiable, and useful” (Williams, 2012:57) seems to me to be potentially transformational of ministerial practice; from the perspectives of both those in ministry and those ministered to.

From a different psychoanalytical perspective based on the work of Lacan, and actively discouraging the possibility of the poem working at levels of transference and countertransference, Williams offers another method of using poems in a way that encourages self-awareness and personal development. I would argue that this is probably a method more safely practised by most teachers in theological and ministerial education. The poem is again identified in the role of analyst.

We can operate creatively in the symbolic. This is the poetic function. Here, we escape the constraints that keep us from realising our potential as individuals and as a society. If speech, the act of language, is a gift, as Lacan insists, then poetry makes the most of this gift. We receive this gift in its fullest sense every time we read, interpret and create poetry - every time we engage in poetic language. (Williams, 2012:5).

Williams goes on to argue that this close reading of poetry in the learning environment creates a poet of the reader. He elaborates that “the poet, in this sense, refers not strictly to one who writes poetry, but to a renewed, and ever renewing, approach to life” (Williams, 2012:5). This quality of “renewed and ever renewing” is in keeping with that which is transforming and transformative suggesting that at least some engagement with poetry in a formation programme might affirm such qualities in ministry. Williams is at pains to point out that he is not suggesting that poetry reading can, over time, replace the therapeutic process. However, formation for ministry is not therapy, although it might be therapeutic. I am not suggesting that poetry reading should be a substitute for other teaching methods. However, recognising language that seeks to define and confine self and others, transcending this confinement through creativity and finding a renewed, and ever renewing approach to life are key qualities of ministry of word within the theopoetic paradigm emerging from this research. As such, it is possible to argue for some direct use of poetry in a formational programme.

In addition, and in keeping with my working definition of theopoetics and with the representation of data in the empirical stages of this research, poetry as a pedagogical tool is one way in which attempts to confine theology to thought processes might be subverted. If the incarnational aspects of ministry are to be fully embraced, being alert

to the way in which a body knows, responding to instincts as well as thoughts, is essential.

The poet seeks to attain a link with the instinctual body through language and form. Instinctual drives provide the motivation for poetic expression, while poetic expression makes these drives manifest in the symbolic. Thus, poetry brings us back to the long-forgotten core of our inner being, getting us in touch with the unconscious and with our primary interdependence (Williams, 2012:6).

Poetry as a tool to encourage interpersonal sacred space (instress)

Incorporating poetry in the teaching of ministerial skills has a slightly different emphasis. Research participant John's account of his ministerial identity included these words:

word
poetry
words in a sermon
ought to help people to say
ah, yes

By introducing poetry into the teaching of ministry of word, students and Readers alike would be learning from those whose words generate knowledge and understanding in those who hear or read them. This knowledge

may range from the personal - insights into the human condition spun from the poet's own experience - to the metaphysical, that is, an understanding of reality in its most complex context. And yet, in both cases understanding often comes from "seeing", a recognition emerging from direct and intuitive awareness rather than as an outcome of snap-tight syllogism. Such recognition becomes a kind of "aha!" moment, a visceral resonance of truth and beauty, even if the truth may be difficult and the beauty may include darkness (Forsthoefel, 2014:112).

John's "ah, yes" and Forsthoefel's "aha!" may be accessed through poems in a way that is truly theopoetic in that it encourages ministers to fully engage with everyday experiences and by its very nature subverts attempts to confine theology to thought processes.

Many poets have written about pastoral encounters or ministerial tasks. These can be used to directly stimulate conversation or personal reflection on the practice of ministry which can be enlightening and immediate in its impact. "The metaphorical language evokes the raw stuff of practice in its vibrancy and colourfulness" (Pryce, 2014b:83). The selecting of poems will be significant. For example, the use of poems to stimulate learning about the act of prayer might include work by Duffy (1992) offering insights

into the struggles and the normality of prayer in today's world; "Some days, although we cannot pray, a prayer/utters itself. So, a woman will lift/her head from the sieve of her hands and stare..." . Alternatively Herbert's (1633) Prayer 1 would evoke a very different image and possibly a different expectation of one's own prayer life in its expressions of prayer as "A kind of tune, which all things hear and fear;/Softness, and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss". Further developing the prayer theme, feminist poetry relating the struggles of prayer within the context of a church named "brother" because of its masculine leadership and which says "I want to pray deeply./I will not withhold any part of my life from the divine gaze./ Will you plunge with me into the depths?" (Slee, 2004a:31) has the potential to challenge many and to evoke a sense of discomfort. Each and every topic will contain such choices. From the ancient and traditional to the modern and the transformational, the intrinsic power in the choice of poem needs to be acknowledged and treated with care. In addition it is important to heed Pryce's warning that "the draw-backs of this kind of reflexive material are that the imaginative character of the material means that for some readers it is hard to interpret and hermeneutically frustrating" (2104b:160). However, to restrict teaching to more concrete examples of ministerial practice would be to limit the transformative potential of such an imaginative learning process for others. Care needs to be taken to ensure a variety of pedagogical styles to incorporate learning styles and personality types sensitively but in a way that challenges prejudices and confronts the status quo.

Not only can poems be perceived as a way of encouraging students and those in ministry to engage with the skills of pastoral care, but poems can challenge normal modes of learning and, while potentially unsettling, lead to growth in personal and interpersonal skills.

Defence mechanisms often stand as obstacles to our efforts to help students gain awareness and achieve renewal through poetry. Students will often limit themselves by rejecting texts that challenge the ego and induce anxiety. We need to approach poems in such a way that attempts to thwart this rejection based on ego defences, and use the challenge to the ego for positive, prosocial growth (Williams, 2012:9).

One way of encouraging such growth is the employment of poems in spiritual development as well as interpersonal development. Affirming the idea that "reflective, meditative openness to spiritual texts can become a powerful mode of transformation", Forsthoefel (2014:118) proposes an engagement with poetry of a particular religious tradition by those who share that tradition as a method of learning and of increasing self-awareness and an understanding of what it is to be human. He suggests that to read poetry in the manner of *lectio divina*; a method that he calls "modern *lectio divina*" (2014:118), can encourage spiritual development, can be therapeutic, and can be applied to the poetry that emerges from all of the world's religious traditions. Within

the Christian tradition to encourage students who might already be familiar with this slow, sacred method of reading scripture to widen its use to encompass the reading of poetry has the potential to

generate insight, self-acceptance, and solidarity in the human condition; readers ... can potentially recognise and resonate with the various existential and spiritual truths of the poems, and in so doing gain profound encouragement, insight, moral support, and good counsel on the path of human development. And that is therapeutic.

(Forsthoefel, 2014:127).

I would add that that is formational, and possibly also transformational in the context of lived (incarnational) experiences and through relationship between the poet, the reader and the hearer. A truly trinitarian practical engagement with sacred poetry.

Poetry as a tool to encourage development of personal vocation (selving)

The assertion that “when we do not integrate our emotions and learn to deal with our anxieties over them, it becomes difficult to accept and appreciate what poetry can offer us” (Williams, 2012:10) could be applied to so many aspects of existence. It is difficult to appreciate ourselves and others, our calling and place in the world and society if our actions are governed by our anxieties over our emotions. If the use of poetry as a pedagogical tool for those encouraging personal and ministerial formation of Readers can address this issue in any part it has great value. My own teaching will change as a result of this research and encouraged by Williams’ work. My own self-awareness has been raised by the topics that have emerged and I will, from now on, be much more intentional in my use of poetry as a way of challenging, encouraging and potentially bringing a level of healing and integration into the lives of others in the way that it has into my own life. To use with confidence what I have in the past considered something of a self-indulgence will be in itself transformative and is probably the most significant contribution to practice that this research has made.

The engaged reader and expressive responder will, ideally, come to discover a new and ever-renewing outlook on life, one that is proactive in the face of personal despair and social problems. Finding the self means realising that you have virtually endless possibilities for your identity. Finding the self essentially means losing the self, or losing the rigid image of self that limits experience. Defences protect this rigid self, but they cannot free one from anxiety. Only an honest appraisal of self can allow for such freedom, and in poetry, we have a great tool for achieving this honesty (Williams, 2012:15).

Not only might the use of poetry written by others be a transformative pedagogical tool, but also incorporating the writing of poetry as a form of theological reflection has the

potential to transform students' and ministers' sense of their own vocation and their confidence in their ministerial self-expression; literally helping someone to find their voice. In this way poetics and pastoral theology come together in the "quest to name God as the one who calls us to incarnate a witness to passion and resurrection in the poetry of our practice" (Walton, 2014b:148).

By way of earthing the possibilities of such a consciously theopoetic paradigm for teaching I offer two case studies. These are both events that have happened very recently that have caused me to reflect on my own teaching. As the data has spoken to me in the development of the performative aspects of this research I have become aware of another, maybe newer, dualism in theological education; that of academic and formational learning. With the advent in September 2014 of the Common Awards Programme validated by Durham University as the pathway for all ordinands and many Readers in training I would argue that there is the potential for seeing academic validity as the domain of Durham University and formational validity as being the responsibility of the Theological Educational Institute and the Ministry Division of the Church of England. This is not the stated intention of either institution but the necessity to pass academic assessments set by just one of the validating bodies can, I believe, begin to polarise these areas of learning unhelpfully. It is my intention to challenge this tendency in myself before it has become a problem.

The second case study is a related but more personal and practical one. It involves my experience of teaching the Common Awards module Pastoral Care, Ethics and Ministry to a group of second year students; ordinands and Readers in training. The module contains significant pastorally and ethically challenging material. Aims of the module include those that are academic in nature; "to introduce students to definitions and issues in pastoral care and ethics" and "to give students a theological understanding in both areas and to consider views and approaches on some specific issues and where these two disciplines connect". These aims can be addressed factually. However, the aims that involve encouraging "students to grow in self-awareness and honesty about their own views and experiences" (University of Durham, 2014) require reflexivity and openness to learn emotionally as well as intellectually. Within the group being taught a number of students were resistant to the idea of gaining knowledge in any way other than through the communication of academic and factual details. This led to defensive behaviour and conflict within the group. This research suggests that overtly addressing this academic/emotional dualism at the beginning of the module by using poetry in the teaching, allowing the poem to become 'the other' in the room, relieving the pressure on the tutor to introduce experiential material, may result in a more collaborative classroom environment by allowing tutor and students to respond and react together to the poetic material.

Affect - reflexive response

At best, reflexivity occurs in the creative space between objectivity and subjectivity, allowing something unique and dynamic to unfold (Etherington, 2004:162).

Finding such a space is not an easy task. Throughout this research it has been my aim to be aware of my own influence on the outcomes. It has also been important to acknowledge my own response to those outcomes and their affect on me and my professional role. The way this space has emerged for me is through poetry. In this section I will intentionally occupy that “space between objectivity and subjectivity” as a way of considering the impact that the research has had on me and ways in which I may have influenced the outcomes.

Slee says that for people “versed in contemporary feminist theology, the idea of the Christa will not be new” (2011:3). I was not one of those people at the outset of this research. I struggled to take up the challenge posed in supervision to consider the relevance of the feminist voice to my topic. I look back over the five years and wonder how I could have been so ignorant but for reasons explored previously it took quite a change of perspective for me to reach the point of associating myself with feminist theology and confessing that the avoidance of such an association has been the root of a significant amount of confusion and discomfort in my spiritual development. The point at which I recognised a desire to align myself more closely with all that feminist theology could bring to my previously articulated desire to give voice to those who are seldom heard and liberation to those who feel themselves to be contained by models of ministry not theirs was during a Summer School exercise responding to the image of the Risen Christa, Emmaus by Emmanuel Ganbay (appendix 10, page 238). Christa wears a red dress with thin shoulder straps. She sits comfortably in the company of men in a dimly lit space. They have bottles and what seems to be a shared plate on the table. Christa’s pose is open. Her hands show the holes created by the nails of crucifixion.

My response to the image took me by surprise and led to reflection and self-examination. I wrote:

I’m a woman on the edge
Seeing the woman at the centre
Daring
flamboyant
central

They love her
Outrageously, joyously
Open in body and facial expression
Mirroring her bigness.
So why do I want to cover her shoulders?
Why do I feel she crosses a line?
Why do I judge her and envy her
at one and the same time?

Why don't they see the holes in her hands?
She knows suffering and engenders joy.
Please help me to move in
To throw my head back
and take off my cardigan!

The work has refused to allow me to stay in the background. It has insisted that I find a voice, lay down some of the coverings of my female existence (taking off the cardigan). I find myself dressing differently as well as thinking and speaking differently. I am not sure this process has made me more likeable. It has certainly not made me more compliant. But it has helped me to allow the more damaged parts of me the level of respect that they deserve. In addition, because “poetry’s / is not found in self-centred ego, but in the substantial depth of living and loving attentively, creatively and responsively” (Veling, 2016:120), the poetic nature of this work has taken me out of myself and into a new understanding of the representational aspects of my professional role. I am not called to present my own views alone when I speak about Reader ministry whether locally or at diocesan or national levels. The personal development that has taken place as a result of this research process and the level of understanding gained because of its findings has, though, enabled me to more confidently express my own thoughts and ideas, while at the same time, speaking with confidence about what other Readers have said.

Hopkins’ concepts have led me to explore my own authentic expressions of the poetic. In the process I have discovered feminist voices that have not negated the initial power of Hopkins’ work but have helped me to move beyond a need to attempt to express myself only in the way that I believed the academic world would find acceptable. Considering the theological themes of creation and creativity, incarnation and transformation within the work and from the perspective of the research findings has led me to consider these themes in my own life and ministry too. In my teaching, both formal and informal, I will be more creative and use more poetry. Living in a body is a human given. This research has led me to a deeper trust of the ways in which it is possible to understand by paying attention to the way in which I respond physically.

Gathering the interview data in the form of found poems, responding to the research process in the form of reflective poetry and seeking throughout to express findings in a way that *does not confine theology to thought processes* has led me to an integration of intellectual and somatic understanding that I am now determined to develop in all aspects of life. In all of this I have found a new sense of liberation to be myself and to be willing to defend my new-found understanding as well as to work to enable those in my professional care to find liberation in their lives and ministries.

Close readings

Poetry can call us back into the company of the Creator, and open us up to appreciate the beauty and giftedness of people and approaches different from ourselves, slowing us down, arresting us so that we look and listen to our inner world and the world without (Pryce, 2014a:95).

My motivation for conducting this research and the basis of the method as well as my own interpretation has been poetic in both its process and in the way it has incorporated written poetry. I have therefore chosen to consider two of the most influential poems in greater depth as part of my reflexive response. I offer a personal reading of both of these poems; Hopkins' God's Grandeur and Slee's Come as a Girl. In the style of close reading but without the literary criticism or intricate analysis, these readings acknowledge the reflexive nature of a Professional Doctorate. The poems have influenced all aspects of this research, but now is the point at which I acknowledge the influence of these two poems and the research process on me; personally and professionally. I also intend to consider the way in which my response to these poems may have influenced the research design and outcomes. This has been a co-operative research project. My participation has been intentional. I have not sought to take myself out of the equation. It is important, though, in order to increase the internal validity of the project, to articulate that influence and I believe the reading of, and responding to, these poems is the most effective and authentic tool to use. Hopkins' poem acts for me as the object, while Slee's has performed the role of the analyst (Williams, 2012:55-56).

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves — goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,
Crying *Whát I dó is me: for that I came.*

I say móre: the just man justices;
Keeps grace: thát keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is —
Chríst — for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

Hopkins' use of sprung rhythm emphasises certain words that may not be so prominent in a more traditional poetic rhythm. Those that stand out to me are "tells, finds, deals, being, selves, speaks, spells, do, me, that, came, more, just, justices, acts, God's, Christ, lovely, Father, features, faces". It is interesting to consciously work with this poem at the end of this research. I am aware that the line "Crying what I do is me: for that I came" has been influential at every stage of the research. My initial desire was to find out how Readers identify themselves; what it is that makes them feel "for that I came". With the exception of the selving stanza I have been careful to present others' expressions of being and only after that presentation to re-present these themes and then to interpret them in the light of the concepts of inscape, instress and selving. I now acknowledge, in this poem, the impact that this research has had on my own understanding of my calling to lay ministry of word and the influence that the process of this research over five years has had on that understanding and expression.

"Tells, deals, selves, speaks, spells, do, acts" all emphasise the change that has taken place in me as a result of the hermeneutical processes that have demanded that I examine my own involvement in this ministry. I could not interpret others' data as a co-researcher/participant without being challenged about my own being and sense of becoming. I am an introvert. I process internally. I do not seek opportunities to share my thoughts and ideas in any more than a very small group environment. This research has demanded that I tell, speak and spell out what I find. In doing so I have been encouraged by this poem that I have something unique to offer to the topic. It is my responsibility to "deal out that being indoors" me dwells. I may be taken far outside my comfort zone to do so, but I have involved others in this process and must honour their contribution to knowledge, understanding and practice by acting confidently on all that they have enabled me to create.

"God's, Christ, lovely, Father, features, faces" further challenge me to acknowledge that my calling, and all that I hope for the outworking of the research is that the missional nature of the Church should be enhanced. Ministry of word; words meeting The Word, is, for me, an opportunity to find God in the features of others' faces and to convey the image of God to a broken world by being, speaking out, acting, that which I am made to be. This research, while integrating the creative and the academic in a way that I could not have hoped or imagined at the outset, has led me to a renewed level of desire to develop more overtly creative modes of self-expression. If, like the kingfisher

and the dragonfly, I am to “catch fire” or “draw flame”; to reflect the beauty of my Creator in a way that might touch others and lead them to a deeper understanding of The Word, I need to respond not only to the words of Hopkins but to the analytical impact of Slee’s poem *Come as a Girl*.

Come as the girl
learning to act grown-up , responsible, in charge

Come as the girl
who loves music, dance, the moon,
the Spirit, food, roundness, struggle, the folk

Come as the girl
not forgetting to be outrageous
audacious, courageous and wilful

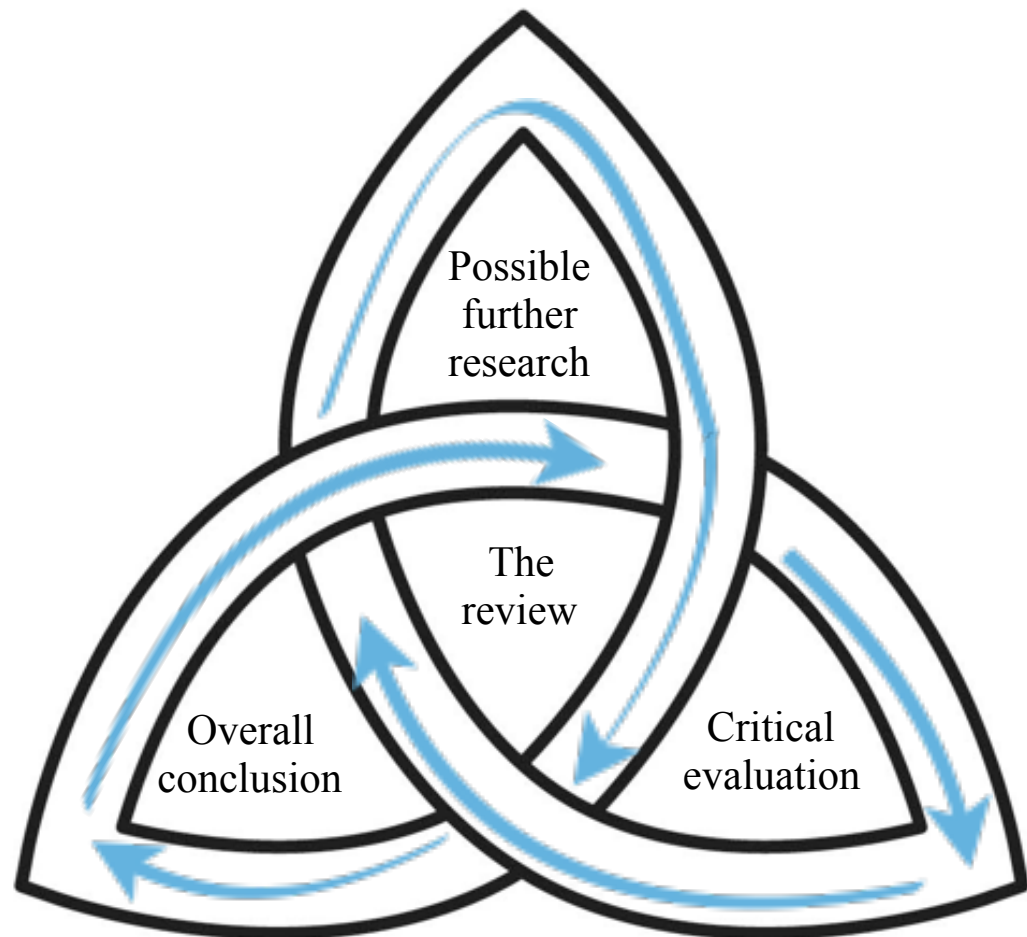
Come as the girl who loves herself
regardless (Slee, 2011:36)

“Come as the girl/learning to act grown-up, responsible, in charge”. The professional doctorate grows out of practice, takes that professional context into conversation with academics, considers and develops concepts in relation to that context and then returns to practice as a way of disseminating the findings of the research and influencing the practice of the researcher and maybe of others in the field. I began this research as an insider. As a Reader working with Reader colleagues I was able to take part in a co-operative research group (Heron, 1996) and to conduct Interviews (Kvale, 1996). However two years ago, just as the empirical stage of the research was drawing to a close, I was appointed to the role of Diocesan Warden of Readers. The reporting of the outcomes of the research, interpretation of the data and construction of a potential formational programme has been conducted from a significantly different professional position from the one in which I started. There have been many times when I have felt that I was coming to this new professional role and that of researcher “as the girl learning to act grown up”, or maybe even pretending to be grown up “responsible, in charge”. The role change has been one that intuitively feels right. It has come about partly as a result of my engagement with the professional doctorate. The process of working with a student cohort, the development of critical thought and realising that I have ways of understanding that are worth defending has increased my self-confidence, given me insights into Reader ministry in our diocese and helped me to find my lay woman’s voice in a professional environment that is predominantly ordained and male. As a result the role change has required me to grow up. This has been essential. I now have an element of oversight of all Readers in the diocese. There

is also pastoral responsibility. I oversee ongoing training and professional development and am the first port of call when ministerial relationships are in difficulty. It is a role that I love, but it has involved me moving from the position of absolute insider into a role that is, at best, on the edge and at times totally outside of the group of people who for thirteen years have been my colleagues. At times I have had to learn to be very grown up. This poem makes me realise, though, that as I have become focused and serious in my work role and in the writing of this thesis I have also lost something of the person who set out on this path. I have written about the synthesis of creativity and academic criticality. But I have forgotten to play. I have stopped writing for my own benefit. It has even been difficult to maintain a learning journal. As someone who has kept a journal for around forty years it is interesting that the requirement to keep such a document has changed its nature to such an extent that it no longer fulfils a creative role. I have found myself in a world of rules and regulations; academic and professional. Slee's poem, in its role as analyst, challenges me. In fact it makes me feel very uncomfortable. I do "love music, dance, the moon". Undertaking this research as a practitioner, not an academic, felt "audacious, courageous" and maybe a little "wilful". I have attempted to be constantly aware of the need for the research to be authentic to my calling to integrate aspects of study, ministry and life that are often presented in polarising language or form. The challenge that I take from this poem into a post-research age is to meet again the girl who loves all that this research is about; words, ministry, poems, experiencing life as an embodied human being. I also hear the challenge to "come as the girl who loves herself - regardless" of the critical evaluation of the academic worth of the research, regardless of the practical value of my conclusions, regardless of what my inner critical voice tells me about the sacrifice others have made so that I can achieve, "regardless"...

Section 4

The Review



"Making sense involves sharing and exploring the significance of perceptions, a capacity to question our clarity or truthfulness in the light of communications from others or renewed engagement with what's in front of us."

(Williams, 2014:x)

Introducing the section

No performance is complete without the feedback offered by the reviewers. While the end result is what is being reviewed, it is all of the component parts that create the performance and therefore inform the outcome and its review. A poem has an initial idea; that which sparks the writing process. It takes some preparation, maybe noting of words or senses before the inspiration can be put into words and a scheme devised and the patterns and rhythms of the poem itself begin to take form. The story being told is communicated in the stanzas that emerge. The poem is then shared; either in spoken or written form. All of these stages in the process are open to critical review. Likewise, this thesis has gone through a number of stages of development to reach its end. The review needs to consider everything from the contextual starting point to the research design, methods of collecting, reporting, interpreting and disseminating data, reflexive responses and the potential impact of the research. Some critique has taken place as the thesis has developed. This section, though, reviews the project as a whole going on to consider the potential for further research and ending with the overall conclusions drawn from the project as a whole.

Critical evaluation

Context

While I have not changed the question as a result of the change in professional context during the time that the research was being undertaken, I have come to understand the scope of the conclusions of the research more widely than I expected. Having taken on a role with responsibility for the life-long learning of those in Reader ministry I now realise the question speaks to formation for Reader ministry at any stage. While any emerging programme might shape initial formation, due to time limitations in initial training, much of the formational work will happen after licensing. Phase 2 of Initial Ministerial Education and continuing ministerial development programmes offer a more spacious context for formation based on the findings and recommendations of this research. I would therefore argue that, while the change in my professional context was not anticipated it has enabled significant development of the outcomes of this research.

Question

Apart from consideration of the question from the point of view of my professional context, the research question has encouraged the research to grow and develop in line with an exploration. Killen and deBeer (1994) argue that it is necessary to begin theological reflection from a “standpoint of exploration”. To have asked a question such as ‘is it possible...’ or how and what questions might have encouraged me to seek definitive answers. Even if not closed questions, there may have been a tendency to

close down the answer. By constantly referring to the question that encouraged me to “explore” I was reminded to remain open to surprises.

Method

Choosing to conduct co-operative research in seeking to carry out the exploration was a decision made predominantly on ideological grounds. I was intentionally both including my own voice in the data and minimising the impact that I could have on the outcome. I am grateful to the other members of the group for all their work. I am grateful to the approval panel for agreeing for me to use this research method. I am not sure that I would recommend it to another doctoral student. The potential for the co-operative nature of the research method to undermine the academic standards necessary for the doctoral process is significant. Using both group processes and interviews enabled the deeply reflective work of the group to be placed alongside, and to establish a framework for, the more focused expressions of interviewees. As a combined methods project I am content that the data gathered contains significant internal validity. I am aware that external validity has been sacrificed, but as an investigation into very personal expressions of the nature of ministry of word the method was successful.

Findings

As an authentic response to the poetic nature of the research it was my desire that the words of the participants should not only be their own, but should be presented in a way that gave voice to the most significant and consistent of the emerging themes. I had concerns about representing other people’s words in poetic form. I was distilling their meaning and may be superimposing my own weighting on their words. However, by re-presenting these words to the participants it became apparent that hearing or reading their own words in such a form was a powerful experience. None of the participants used expressions like ‘you’ve represented me well’ or ‘I like what you’ve done with my words’. Neither did any of them ask for changes to be made or express concern about the words that had been highlighted in this way. All of them expressed surprise that these were their own words and a sense that what they had said was significant.

Working from full transcripts, listening to the recordings over and over again at the same time as reading the written transcript enabled me to respond to non-verbal cues such as pauses, intakes of breath, laughter and intonation. This method called for considerable trust of my intuition as well as objective recording of the words spoken. It did, though, offer a record of participant’s words that was congruent with the thesis as a whole and which developed this method in its use in a theological research project.

Dissemination

My history and personality are such that sharing my work with others, and particularly in published form, is not my natural way of being. However this work has become something about which I am passionate. Two chapters of the book *Instruments of Christ's Love* (Tovey et al., 2016) grew out of this research. The book has received several positive reviews. Lovell (2016) speaks of its 'edginess' which he considers to be a positive aspect of a book about Reader ministry. Without the confidence gained in the research and writing process involved in this thesis my chapters in that book would never have been written. Having exposed myself to such public scrutiny I am now much more consciously incorporating the research and its results into my teaching and pastoral work with Readers, thus disseminating the findings and my own increasing understanding and knowledge intrinsically. Having taken a while to reach this level of confidence I look back over the five years with some regret that I did not take more opportunities to offer work-in-progress presentations at conferences. It is my intention to take every opportunity that presents itself confidently and creatively in my post-doctoral roles.

The question that has been in the background as this research has progressed both in my own mind and also increasingly within the national conversations about ministry in the Church of England has been whether there is a future for Reader ministry and, if so, what that future might look like. It was never my intention to conduct research that would enlighten understanding about the history of Reader ministry. Neither was it my goal to analyse ministry as it is offered today with all of its joys and problems. This would have been valuable research but, for me, the motivation of the research has always been to find a positive way forward for lay ministry of word (that which at the moment in the Church of England we call Reader ministry). It is my belief that this research offers some valuable insights and new understanding that can inform that way forward. It is my responsibility to take these positive insights that the Readers who shared in this research have offered and to share them with others so that they can make the difference that I believe they have the potential to make. I will find as many ways to disseminate the findings of this work as I possibly can.

The motivation for the research and my own professional context, as well as the make up of the research group and interview cohort, have resulted in a research project that has spoken intentionally about the role of the Reader in the Church of England. The findings and the way in which it is envisaged that the research will impact practice have also been communicated in terms of Reader ministry. However, when it comes to the influence of those findings and the way in which the research is disseminated it is my belief that the impact is much broader than one group of lay ministers working in one expression of the Christian church. The church's ministry is not the sole domain of those who are ordained or licensed and all that has been discovered about expressing

faith in creative, incarnational and transformative ways relates to anyone living out their faith in a way that desires a deeper understanding of the believer's inner landscape, ways in which inter-personal sacred space may be experienced and the desire to serve God in ways that are particular to their own being and calling. Sharing these findings with colleagues with responsibility for discipleship, mission and ministry in its broadest sense, will be something that I will take seriously as this research finds an embedded life in my own work. In addition the insights which are, in the Church of England as it is today, Reader specific in their relation to preaching, which is an expression of ministry only open to those who are ordained or licensed, may have the ability to open a creative conversation with those in other church traditions, particularly the Methodist Church, who fulfil lay preacher/teacher roles.

Reflexivity

Again, if I could turn the clock back I would be more diligent about keeping my reflexive journal up to date. It has been written, but not in the creative way that I am used to journaling. However, it is my belief that the loss of confidence and motivation that occurred, particularly in the middle of the research process, offers a great deal of material for reflection and reflexivity. The 'doldrums' period after the empirical research had been completed and the transcriptions made seemed to be non-productive time. I now recognise that the fermentation that was happening, having spent months in the company of the words of others, was essential. Playing and replaying, both literally and in my mind, the interviews and group discussions allowed me to both inhabit and to be inhabited by the subject matter, the passion with which participants spoke about their ministry and the impact that all of this had on me and on my professional role. It also gave me time to consider how my professional role might be used to influence the future of Reader ministry in my diocese. This is a powerful position and one that I must always balance with the understanding that my research cohort was small and self-selected. There are Readers who do not share the ideas, ideals and sense of calling. There are other Readers for whom ministry is at best adequate and at worst frustrating and hurtful because of the influence of others with greater power to prevent them from fulfilling their calling. In my enthusiasm for all that has been shared with me, all that I have learned and the possible influence of this research on future ministry I must never lose sight of the fact that crafting and re-crafting understanding of the divine from existing language, fully engaging with everyday experiences (whether good or bad) and refusing to confine theology to thought processes is something that I am called to do on behalf of those whom I am called to serve as well as a process that I can hope to encourage others to engage in.

Possible further research

A number of possible further projects have emerged as this thesis has been written.

Those that I would most like to follow up are:

- the use of poetry as a learning tool. Building on Pryce's research (2014b) into the use of poetry in CMD for clergy and his suggestion that further research might be with CMD for Readers it would be possible to conduct a cross-diocese research project to develop both theses.
- a consideration of the use of poetry as data rather than poetry from data. Having considered the topic of poetics with the Reader participants in this project I have received a number of poems written by those participants. To encourage the writing of poetry as a way of expressing responses to questions and topics would be a development of this work that I would be very interested to consider.
- exploration of the idea of Reader ministry offering a secret touch. The poem written by the participant in this research has had a significant impact on others' understanding of their own ministry that offers secret touches of God's presence to others. I would very much like to conduct a narrative research project working with a small group of Readers to work with the idea of 'secret touch'.
- further development of the concept of Readers as artisans and wordsmiths. Much has been written in the body of the thesis about the idea of the Reader as the wordsmith. A dedicated project to develop that one concept further from writing and interview material would be beneficial as the roles of those in licensed lay ministries broaden and diverge.

Overall Conclusion

In summary, this exploration of the possibility of a theopoetic paradigm for ministry of word and its influence on formation for Reader ministry has resulted in a paradigm and its theological underpinning which is trinitarian in nature, reflecting the creativity of the Father, the incarnation of the Son and the liberation and transformation offered by the Holy Spirit. Hopkins' concepts of inscape, instress and selving provide a framework. The triquetra offers a form of that framework that evidences the need for interconnection and not separation of each of the phases in either initial training or ongoing ministerial education. The work has challenged a number of polarised ideas, concluding that it is possible to speak of that which is ontological and existential, academic and creative, conceptual and practical and maybe most significantly that which is pastoral theology and poetic. The overriding influence on the final thesis has been my transition from a polarised world to one of integration which has been shaped by the feminist pastoral theologians and poets who have generously and honestly written about their struggles and their triumphs.

My final full stop

Agnostic tendencies to the fore
I hear of you
But really don't believe.

Some have travelled this way already.
I've followed on
But haven't dared to pause.

Fog lifting now I see you - minute
but fully formed.
Approach with care you say.

Bittersweet recognition fills me.
The end is nigh.
Dare I admit you're real -
 my final full stop?

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Appendix 1: Paper 1

Seeking a Theological Framework for Formation for Reader Ministry Today

Paper 1

Sally A. Buck
January 2012

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Professional
Doctorate in Practical Theology with Cambridge Theological
Federation and Anglia Ruskin University

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Abstract

Training for ministry in the Church of England involves the academic study of theology and formation for ministry. This paper addresses the concept of formation in a culture of targets and competencies. Measurement of growth relating to the vocational aspects of ministry (particularly Reader ministry) is not straightforward. Paying attention to the voices of Readers, the wider issues of context and the author's own voice this paper begins to ask the question "what is the shape of ministry we are forming people to carry out?". Further engagement with voices from the disciplines of poetics, wisdom and liberation theologies enables the beginnings of a conversation about a theological framework that might liberate the vocation to Reader ministry (alongside a liberated Priesthood) in ministries that go beyond words to engage wisely with the cries of our generation.

Key words: Reader ministry; ministry of the word; vocation; formation; theopoesis; wisdom; liberation

Introduction

"A rock formation; cloud formations; formation of a crystal": the Cambridge online dictionary's examples of formation defined as "the way something is naturally made or development of a particular thing or shape" (ibid).

This paper considers ways in which the concept of formation might be applied to ministry training with the desire to encourage the beautiful and creative forms of growth implied by these definitions within the constraints of university accredited courses and with officially identified competencies to be achieved (Ministry Division: Appendix 1)

Measuring growth in such areas is not straightforward but, within the framework of Pastoral Theology as Awareness (Leech, 2007), and in conversation with academic voices from three disciplines, recommendations for further research into Reader identity and a reframing of the language of vocation and formation in terms of that which is poetic, wise and liberating emerge. Deepening these conversations and enabling those in established ministries and in training to contextualise this work in future papers will aim to propose methods of assessing and valuing growth in those offering for ministry. For now, though, the conversation can only begin.

My Context

Working within ministry training in the Church of England with responsibility for the "formational" content of a course which has over a hundred ministry students I am increasingly aware of the hopes and fears that people bring to theological education. I desire to understand how we might adopt the best of the criteria-, target-based ways of learning whilst at the same time valuing the inner, not so easily measurable, aspects of formation for public ministry. In order to consider what this might entail I need first to examine the shape of the ministry we are training people for. Literature searches uncover significant material relating to the shape of priestly ministry, but there is very little available literature to help to identify what it is that Reader ministry looks like vocationally as well as functionally. As a Reader for the past eleven years this is not a surprise, but it still confuses and saddens me. Having confirmed this disparity I now feel the need to understand what makes Reader ministry distinctive as a

lay ministry, but one mandated by Bishop's license, and then to ask more focussed questions about how we offer formation in Reader training.

To this end I intend, initially, to use as a framework the model of Pastoral Theology as Attention posed by Jane Leech. She echoes my motivation and desire when she writes

"I find myself convinced, with Julie Hopkins, that "the Christian faith will only be relevant if it listens to the pain, hopes and longing for salvation of those who are looking for God" (Hopkins, 1995: 106), and I wonder how much of such discernment goes on amongst those who teach student ministers and make decisions about whom to ordain" (Leech 2007 p.23)

I would need to add "or license" to this question, but given that shared motivation, it seems appropriate to use her model of pastoral theology as a reference point for my initial reflection.⁵ I will work with this model to consider the voices demanding, and fragmenting, my attention at the beginning of this process. Then the most significant voices will be identified and a more in-depth consideration of what they might contribute will form the second half of this paper.

Step 1. Whose voices am I hearing?

"It's no laughing matter going about the place
all the time being somebody else:
people mistake you; you mistake yourself"

(Jackie Kay, 2005)

I am most aware at the moment of the voices of Readers in my own diocese. There have been conversations recently, nationally and locally, about the role of Readers and whether all Readers should be ordained Deacon and the category of Reader abolished. Many Readers' opinions are summed up in these words: "We're seen as half-baked clergy. We are used to fill the least popular slots on the rota and many feel that they're treated as if they have a fag end ministry.

⁵ Leech suggests a five step model. Attention is paid to the voices involved in the immediate situation, the wider issues, our own voice, the theological tradition and the mission of the church (Leech, 2007)

Why should a calling to preach and to teach be regarded as part of the path to receiving a dog collar? Can our Church affirm lay ministry not as a second class calling?" (Ian Smith, 2006). Sadly the feeling does not seem to have changed in the intervening years. The most recent annual return statistics on Reader ministry prompted this comment from the secretary of the Central Reader's Council: "The really disturbing figure is that the number of Readers under the age of 40 is just 1% of the total. The number under 30 is best described as infinitesimal. Why? We have a Gospel to proclaim, don't we? I hesitate to offer reasons. They can hardly avoid being critical of the Reader movement as it now stands" (Alan Wakely, 2011).

According to Rowling and Gooder "Reader ministry isn't a concept or an idea or a theory but an outworking of God's gifts and graciousness in the lives of those who are called to it" (Rowling and Gooder, 2009 p.104). Having said that, two of the six "Readers" they quote as examples of those with particular, defined, ministries have been ordained - at least in part because of the complexities involved in being Readers in leadership roles within the Church of England (ibid).

If we, and the Church, do not know, or at least cannot tell, who Readers are and what it is we are called to, how can we tell our story and how can God's gifts be worked out and his graciousness experienced? And if we cannot tell our own story coherently, how can we tell our faith story in relation to our ministry? Across the Church of England (in 31 dioceses out of 44 as at 3rd January 2012) Readers are represented and pastored by a Warden who is an ordained person. This cannot help but nuance the lay voice. If one of the problems of identity expressed by Readers is related to a sense of being "fag end clergy" (Smith, 2006), being represented at diocesan and national levels by clergy, however well-meaning, can only reinforce that identity. If "self-making is a narrative art" (Angus and McLeod, 2004) and if by taking away a person's, or a group's, expression of self through language "or something prevents language being easy and fluent you will fragment their adherence to a community" (Wade, 2009) then one of my hopes for this work is that it will help those who sense God's call to a preaching and teaching ministry (a "ministry of

the word") to find words to express what that ministry means and to find renewed belonging to a community united by a sense of common calling.

Another significant voice is that of our students, many of whom question their particular calling when training and with others on different vocational paths. It is intended that students and Readers will be given the opportunity to tell their own story, and to help me to frame my research question, in subsequent papers.

Step 2 Wider issues?

"Weary of all who come with words, words but no language

I make my way to the snow-covered island.

The untamed has no words.

The unwritten pages spread out on every side!

I come upon the tracks of deer in the snow.

Language but no words"

Tomas Transtromer (2002)

We belong to a culture that emphasises targets. Our selection and training for ministry is inevitably, and possibly necessarily, influenced by the culture of the context in which we minister. Hence the criteria set out by The Ministry Division of the Church of England (Appendix 1). These criteria enable us to offer a coherent, standardised method of selection and training for ministry. They are not purely functional in the areas that they assess, but my concern, based on professional experience in large organisations, is that if we allow criteria to become targets they may also lead us into a culture of "words but no language" (Transtromer, 2002)

My desire is to be able to value, and express, that which contains "language but no words"(ibid.) This desire is fuelled and informed by my professional history. Working with those marginalised by limited language, either through catastrophic physical events, psychological distress or removal from society, I have learned the importance of self-expression. Both as a reflective tool and a therapeutic one, telling a story can enable people to make connections between their own self-identifying voices and the world in which they live (Bolton, 2004). Women in prison who have generously shared their stories with me provide

voices that inform my thinking. They are often from backgrounds that lead to the most painful lack of valued self-expression; in 2008 37% of women in prison were known to have attempted suicide (Crichton and Towl, 2008). The privilege of working alongside women as they told their story and found a new sense of identity has changed me and will always inform how I work with people.

Step 3 My Own Voice

"Beauty loves freedom; then it is no surprise that we engage beauty through the imagination..... Beauty calls us beyond ourselves and it encourages us to engage the dream that dwells in the soul" (O'Donohue, 2004 p.61)

"She sits like a bird, brooding on the waters,
hovering on the chaos of the world's first day;
she sighs and she sings, mothering creation,
waiting to give birth to all the Word will say." (Bell, 1998)

I cannot remember a time in my life when words, and particularly the finely crafted words of the poets, were not the vehicle that enabled Beauty to call me beyond myself. As a teenager I was introduced to the work of Gerard Manley Hopkins: the poet, the Jesuit, the lover of nature and of God, the one who struggled with life and faith. Hopkins' poetry gave me permission to unite heart, soul and mind. Thinking critically about faith and responding from the heart in the form of crafted, sprung rhythm with its surprises and complexities engaged a passion for "the word". I need to acknowledge that this passion for words and a desire to incorporate in my work a waiting on the Spirit to "give birth to all the Word will say" (Bell, 1998), which for me were united when I was licensed to Reader ministry, may not correlate with others' motivation for following this call. I need to allow other interpretations if my research is to be valid. Having said that, the poetic is important to me - in teaching and writing - and I wish to find ways of expressing the academic that will resonate with the heart/soul/head connections that I so value in poetry.

I cannot carry out this research without also paying attention to my own prejudices, hopes, fears, anger, sorrows and joys. I therefore anticipate that the research will be reflexive and possibly, in part, autoethnographic; engaging with my personal history which when "it is known to us and processed in ways that allow us to remain in contact emotionally and bodily with others whose stories remind us of our own, can enrich our role as researcher." (Etherington, 2004 p. 180). To listen to my own voice, as it is influenced by, and influences, those in my personal life, in academic writing, in the social and political world and in arts and literature will be an important component of the beginning stages of establishing a research question and methodology.

One major influence has been in a working life spent with those on the margins (of health and society). This has left me with a desire to open channels for those who are ignored to be heard. Two people have influenced this thinking over the years. One is Brother Ramon, the Franciscan Monk, Master of Glasshampton, hermit and writer. His ability to engage seriously with God and with those in his care was infectious and life-giving. Life is experienced as an adventure. "Chancing and daring are part of the adventure, and sometimes there is the fear of really letting go, but having gone thus far there is no return" (Ramon, 1998). My greatest desire is to assist in the process of freeing people (and I include myself) to be more fully those whom God created and is calling to serve him. I identify with the fear involved in letting go but that is where the words of another influential character take over.

Paul Oestreicher, speaking at a graduation ceremony in 2005 said "As you go out into the world, take care. And as you take care, of those on the margins, take risks." Readers often work on the margins and need equipping to do so, but Reader ministry today seems somewhat marginalised itself, and so his words influence my own voice which says that I must take risks as I engage in this research - the risk of being misunderstood; the risk of being less than capable of the task; the risk of losing myself in the enormity of the task - in order to tell the story and to attempt to find a theological framework for Reader ministry that might lead to appropriate formation and growth.

Steps 4 and 5: The theological tradition and mission of the church will be considered in greater depth in the second half of this paper and so are not referred to at this point.

Reflection

Paying attention to the voices thus far I am not surprised by the extent to which my own thinking is influenced by the world of poetry and literature. I am surprised, though, by the strength of desire that has surfaced as I have written which is about liberation. It has surfaced as an all-encompassing voice relating to the liberation of people to be who they are created to be, liberation of Readers to own and celebrate their calling and my personal liberation to write and teach authentically and in a way that gives others room to interpret and challenge what I say. There is also a desire to liberate the wider church to accept many and varied ministries and to see formation and growth as art-forms, allowing those whom God calls to be creative, challenging, challenged and to take the gospel to the world as it is now in all its beauty and brokenness. Liberation for its own sake, however, will serve neither God nor church nor world. There is a need for wisdom.

Three words have surfaced which need further exploration - **poetic, wise and liberating**. If there is to be a theological framework for Reader ministry today it needs to encompass these three. I therefore now consider in more detail the work of three people in the fields of poetry and theology (Kuschel), Christian wisdom (Ford) and liberation theologies (Pears).

POETRY

Poetry has, as I have indicated above, influenced my thinking and feeling for as long as I can remember. The careful crafting of words which means that in a few lines a poem can say so much, the use of rhythm to give emphasis to words that might otherwise be overlooked and the trust that the poet places in the reader to find a relevant interpretation without the need for long and detailed explanation all challenge me to reconsider how I communicate and teach. But most of all, poetry has always allowed me to question. Poetry, as an art-form, stimulates further seeking. My motivation for engaging with the poetic in my

quest for a model of formation for ministry is to allow the artistic, the unpredictable growth of that which is being formed and to celebrate its beauty without needing to quantify it.

I do not know where this thinking will take me, but I know that I cannot turn away from it.

In the words of Charlotte Mew:

"...suddenly it snapped the chain
Unbarred, flung wide the door
Which will not shut again;
And so we cannot sit here any more....
Though yet we do not know
Who called, or what marks we shall leave upon the snow."

(Mew, C 1869-1928)

The concept of the Poet as Mirror (Kuschel, 1997) might help in further consideration of this genre and its possible contribution to formation. Kuschel writes of his motivation to explore his subject:

"I have found that it was not so much sermons, catechisms and theological treatises as the poets, novelists and playwrights who disclosed to me a bit of truth in truthfulness... Poetic texts cast their spell on me with their beauty, compelled me with the rhythm of their language, enthused me with their imagery... They confirmed my determination always also to mistrust my own perceptions and to make my role as a Christian, a theologian and a citizen the subject of criticism....Through poetic texts I learned that in the name of God one can and must resist full-blown assertiveness, be faithful to one's own thought - and also faithful to one's own doubts" (ibid p.1).

It is for this reason, with all of its resonances with my own desires for the outworking of this research, that I have chosen his voice to take my thoughts about poetry's role in my work further.

Kuschel takes a term from the poetry of Kurt Tucholsky (1928) - the Glass Man. The poem takes the reader through the process of a man gazing upon his reflection in a mirror. At first he sees only the posed, "perfect" image that he wants to see. On looking further he begins to see imperfections and the reality of the person in the mirror. Gillie Bolton offers a method of reflective writing which she terms "beyond the mirror" which takes this concept a step further. Not only can poetic writing help us to see the true image in the mirror but it can help us to transcend our own image and enter into a new world, offering a new perspective on "reality" (Bolton, 2010).

All who minister in the church know the reality of working amongst people who are struggling with failure. As Western societies we have failed financially, we fail in terms of social cohesion and community, we fail to create an environment in which all people are valued and we fail in our own personal lives and relationships. Globally we seem to be failing to be guardians of creation. Kuschel draws on the work of a number of poets to address the realities of personal failure, guilt and fear and the possible ending of all of creation due to humanity's choices and direction of travel. The poems allow for deep exploration of feelings and fears without becoming sentimental or condemning. In particular he quotes the work of Kurt Marti who writes out of a sense of his own and the world's craziness; a craziness which is "neither pathology nor pose. Rather it stems from a hope which has no rational foundation and which cannot have a foundation - as a tradition of a crazy hope" (Kuschel, 1997 p.80).

it may be
that I do not rightly understand
what being born means

it may be
that I am waiting at a lost post

it may be
that it is crazy
who still counts on miracles

crazy like the women
who in tomb of a dead man
discovered the new birth

(Kurt Marti, 1987)

Perhaps being able to live with such hope is the only way that we can help our students to listen "to the pain, hopes and longing for salvation of those who are looking for God" (Hopkins, 1995) and to have something to offer that does not rely on right answers or dogma. Maybe it can also give hope to those who struggle with a lack of clear definition of their role. Not knowing what "being born means" may lead us to look in the right places and to realise that we have "discovered the new birth" (ibid).

To be people who have sufficient safe space within which to listen to the cries of those who are looking for God we need to be aware of our own pain, hopes and longings. Kuschel argues that

"writers confront human beings with themselves, their contradictions, their abysses, but also their hopes and expectations. The poetics of the human in the twentieth-century literature is a poetics of conflict, of fragility, of self-doubt, of the fear of destruction, of the penetrating quest for meaning. Literature reflects the whole palette of the risks of human existence, all that undermines self-confidence (the man in the mirror) and trust in the world (experience of the apocalypse and of evil)... It shows human beings as those who take risks, who cannot be explained, who are an abiding riddle to themselves and others."

(Kuschel, 1997 p.128).

If formation for ministry can include a level of working with such texts, those being licensed for ministry should have a deeper understanding of their fears, hopes and expectations and of those among whom they live and minister.

The Reader ministry is a ministry of the word. The Reader ministry is also being identified by some as that of lay theologian. With this in mind I turned to Kuschel's work on theopoetics. Quoting Karl Rahner's term "the silent incomprehensibility of God", Kuschel speaks of the awareness of the great poets that "any talk can come only from the primal ground of silence..... What is said must be wrested from the unsaid and the unsayable.... The same is true of Christian theo-logy. It too ultimately stems from the awareness that God's reality

escapes any linguistic interpretation." (ibid p.218). At this point in my reading I began to question the plausibility of a ministry without non-verbal signs and symbols. A ministry of the word and not of sacrament (a ministry of the lay theologian) seems to be at odds with the concept that there can be no linguistic interpretation of God's reality. Can the Reader body not find an identity because, in fact, there cannot be one?

Kuschel goes on from this thought, though, to say that

"Christian theology is worthy of its name only if it gives talk of God and to God priority over silence. The prologue to the Gospel of John does not say "In the beginning was silence" but "In the beginning was the word". That is an extraordinary bold statement, but its boldness dawns on us only when we have experienced the fascination of wordless, object-less meditation and the meaning of a disgust with language and the impotence of language in theology.The word is not an external, even inferior dimension of God, but God's being. Thus "God" is not identical with a mysterious enigmatic silence, God is manifest - in the word. That is at the same time a consolation and a burden. That constitutes the greatness and the misery of any human talk of God" (ibid p. 218)

"A consolation and a burden". The consolation - there seems to be a place for a distinctive identity for Reader ministry. The burden - an even greater urgency to ensure that formation for such ministry involves encounter with wordlessness as well as words and leads to, and through, a stage of "disgust with language and with the impotence of language" (ibid).

This very short conversation with one of Kuschel's works does not begin to do justice to the role that theopoetics might play in a theological examination of formation for ministry. There are many areas of this work, including Kuschel's exhortation to a multi-cultural perspective, which cannot find their place in this paper, but which have influenced and inspired me to consider this area in much more detail as this work progresses.

Meanwhile, some of the first poetry that set me on this path almost forty years ago:

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil

Crushed.....

And though the last lights off the black West went

Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—

Because the Holy Ghost over the bent

World broods with warm breast and with ah!

bright wings (Hopkins G M in Gardner and MacKenzie, 1967))

Words which exemplify the ability of the poet to express something of the unimaginable depth and greatness of God. They also bring me back to the Spirit, brooding over the earth "waiting to give birth to all the Word will say" (Bell, 1998). The Spirit in Bell's song referred to as "she"; Wisdom so often referred to in the feminine. How might Wisdom help me to move from this point of needing to recognise both the inadequacy and the absolute necessity of words in our ministry?

WISDOM

If I had any hope that reading about Christian wisdom would lead to straightforward answers to the questions generated by reading about poetry they were short-lived. David Ford is my chosen conversation partner when considering this topic and towards the beginning of his book *Christian Wisdom* he writes:

"The wisdom pedagogy works through radical searching, debate, controversy and powerful poetry to suggest a way of living wisely before God in the face of extreme testing. There are no neatly packaged answers, and religious tradition is brought face to face with its limitations in coping with cries from the midst of trauma. The wisdom is embodied in someone who cries out, who refuses the friends' packaged traditional answers, who searches and is searched, and whose passionate longing for God is fulfilled in ways that elude conceptual capture" (Ford, 2007 p.6)

Again, the challenge is to go beyond any attempt to use words in a way that seems to offer a packaged, formulaic expression of God or ministry. Ford also emphasises the need to be culturally (and cross-culturally) aware. Concentrating on Luke's gospel he states that the core concept is "that of prophetic wisdom" saying that "like John in his use of the cross-cultural concept of Word, Luke too is alert to forms of behaviour and expression in his culture

that offer the possibility of being affirmed, critiqued and transformed in the light of the Gospel. This complex hermeneutical engagement with his contemporary world is informed on the one hand by being steeped in his Greek Bible, the Septuagint, and on the other by being fluent in the religious, cultural, medical, political and economic languages of his environment" (ibid p.60). So, in order to have access to language with which to "cry out" in the midst of our own trauma, but more specifically as ministers of the word, as a way of giving voice to the cries of others and to what we believe a deeper knowledge of God might bring to those situations, it is essential that the Reader becomes fluent in the language of the surrounding cultures. It seems important to consider the way in which this quest to understand our surrounding cultures might be approached.

It is tempting to want to gather narratives with which to create a framework of understanding. A warning comes in the words of William Stacy Johnson when he writes: "there is no such thing as a "narrative" - whether unified or otherwise - apart from the contingent theological wisdom of those who are doing the narrating... the reflections of the wisdom literature of Scripture challenge the all-inclusiveness and the tendencies to triumphalism of narrative" (Johnson, 2003 pp109-10). Margaret Barker also warns of our "tendency to see what we have been taught to see, to hear what we have been taught to hear, and to use only what we have always used" (Barker, 2004 p.7). If we gather narratives and "hear what we have always heard" and interpret through the theological constructs that we always use, we will be missing the "contingent theological wisdom" of the narrators. We must equip ministers of the word with skills of listening deeply to the narrators and then, in the appropriate language, bringing those narrations to the awareness of those who are speaking a different language. This could be to bring those stories from the world into the church in order that the church better understands the world in which it is situated. The challenge of Bishop Robert, Chair of the National Reader Council, to Readers to be those who day by day work "outside the confines of the church institution", whose job is not to "oil the wheels of the church" and who need to "move away from seeing the Reader as a quasi vicar and to reaffirm their layness" (+Robert Paterson, 2011) may well be an uncomfortable one which will require significant wisdom to fulfil.

Students first need to be encouraged to acknowledge the desire to see God's purposes fulfilled in the way that Anna, waiting in the Temple for the coming of Jesus (Luke 2:36-38) exemplifies (Ford, 2007). They then need to be given a means of expressing the cries that result from this desire and those of the world around them.

Ford considers a model for hearing the cries and the impact that this has on faith (and, I would add, ministry) formation through five literary moods: the indicative, imperative, interrogative, subjunctive and optative. Attention to these moods is essential as we listen to, take beyond words and then reframe in a language that can interpret and inform the cries of our generation. Ford argues that Christian teaching has concentrated on the first two of these moods, the indicative, which is about affirming and being affirmed and the imperative - obedience to the two calls to "follow me" (the call of Jesus) and "listen to him" (the call of his Father). Effectively we become people who hear the good news and move very quickly into a mode of "doing". Paying attention to the other moods, Ford argues, would make "an enormous difference to the way faith is understood and lived." (ibid p.45)

The Interrogative mood; that of questioning and being questioned can give us a starting point. We do not have a faith, and therefore should not attempt to have ministries, based on having all the answers but that are willing to question, be questioned and then re-question and re-evaluate. The subjunctive is the mood of possibilities and surprises. Ford says that "the faith that has taken to heart the subjunctive dimension of the Gospel lives in alertness to the Spirit who is inexhaustibly surprising." (ibid). A willingness to be surprised by what the Spirit brings to the narratives we hear is imperative if we are to minister to those who have little or no faith language with which to express their needs, desires and hopes. And the optative mood is that of desiring and being desired. Ford points to the prevalence of desire in Luke's gospel and to the fact that acting on desire for God ultimately leads to blessing. To strive to bring the narratives of our community into the light of Wisdom is to hope for blessing which is "the ultimate in desiring good for the other, or just celebrating a fulfilment of desire that, when God is its goal and inspiration, can inexhaustibly open up to fresh fulfilments, joys and blessings." (ibid p.50)

Here Kuschel's theopoetics and Ford's wisdom begin to speak a similar language. Ford implores us to question, to expect surprises and to live with a

desire to know God and bring blessing. Kuschel states that "belief in God firmly resists all too easy certainties and all too self-certain unbelief" (Kuschel, 1997 p. 225). Together these approaches begin to speak to me of a way of hearing the narratives of those around us (those who are crying out in need or desire) in ways that will be liberating.

LIBERATION

None of this will be possible in isolation. The context of our ministry and the community within which we live will shape us (and we it) in ways that we can only glimpse. The final conversation of this paper is with the voice of contextual, liberating theology in the work of Angie Pears.

In her book *Doing Contextual Theology* (2010) Pears considers a number of liberation theologies and their contextual applications. For the purposes of this paper I am concentrating on her work relating to feminist informed theologies. This decision has been made for two reasons. One is the practicality of a word limit that does not allow further exploration at this stage, but future papers may take into consideration a broader scope of liberation theologies if appropriate. The other is that in conversation with a number of people associated with my work and study I have been asked whether I am considering feminist theology as part of my initial investigations and my natural inclination has been to resist this idea. I am therefore challenging myself to hear the voice of those around me and to consider the root of my own resistance to the specifically feminist-informed liberation theologies.

One of the reasons for my resistance to a specific conversation with feminist theology is my natural dislike of any potentially exclusive framework. Pears, however, begins her exploration of feminist theologies by stating her intention to "focus on how the diversity of women's lives has forced feminist informed theologies to take account of the complex and multilayered nature of oppression and to recognise that the context of any human life has many dimensions and can never be reduced to just one thing such as gender, social and economic status, race or sexuality" (Pears, 2010 p79). Whilst I am not arguing that the Reader body is an oppressed community, I do feel that the lack of a significant voice and the confusion over identity need to be addressed and

it may be in these theologies that a way of setting free that voice and acknowledging a common identity will be found.

The work of Valerie Saiving (1960) is cited by Pears as claiming the tendency in women to depend for their identity on others. Information gathered so far would suggest a parallel here in that Readers are, in many cases, dependent on others for their identity; particularly as those representing the Reader voice nationally are predominantly Priests. Pears points out that "even at this very early stage of feminist theological analysis there is the crucial recognition that traditional theologies and their underlying assumptions were detrimental and limiting not only for women but for men as well" (Pears, 2010 pp.82-83). I would argue that similarly a theology of vocation and ministry that does not fully give voice to the lay dimensions of both is not only detrimental to those whose vocation is distinctly lay, but also diminishes the distinctiveness of ordained diaconal and priestly vocations. By finding a lay expression of vocational identity, all might be liberated to express their sense of calling without the need to justify and compare.

With reference to the work of others (Callahan, 1970; Ruether, 1971), Pears highlights a sense of continuity and tradition within the discipline of feminist theology as it relates to transformative issues of justice which are seen as relating to our Christian narrative and heritage and allow feminisms to be described as "a specific contextual tool of Christian hope" (Pears, 2010). This takes me back to my consideration of the potential held within poetics to offer hope in the "crazy hope" (Kuschel, 1997) of the poetry of Kurt Marti. Liberating people to minister in a way that is authentic to their sense of vocation must never become self-serving, but must be rooted in the Christian message of hope and seek the liberation of others to find relevant expressions of faith in their every day lives.

Identifying a number of stages of feminist theologies Pears considers a range of responses to the question of how traditional theology might be viewed and valued from a feminist point of view (Pears 2010). Those she highlights are the "post-Christian response of theologians such as Mary Daly, Carol Christ and Daphne Hampson who argue that the traditions and structures of Christianity

are so inherently male and patriarchal that they are beyond reform" and the "reformist approach which for varying reasons does not see the Christian tradition as beyond hope for women and sets itself the task of redressing this apparent absence" (ibid p.92). Among the reformists she identifies Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza whose work spans fifty years from the early 1960s to the present day. For the purposes of considering a theology of lay ministry I am, at the moment, positioning myself with the latter. A literature search of vocation and ministry finds considerably more evidence of ordained ministry than lay, but this does not mean that lay ministry has not been significantly influencing the identity of the church; simply that those in a position to write and study at depth have predominantly been either theologians with no vocation to ministry or those in ordained ministries. It does not feel like the time to say there is no place for recognised and licensed lay ministry - simply time to find a model for reforming the church's way of communicating what is at the heart of all vocational ministries.

The works of Fulkerson, 1997 and Lorde, 1992 are cited by Pears as highlighting the assumption that all women's experience is the same and thus creating in itself an exclusivity within feminist theologies, which is the very criticism of feminist theologies that made me reluctant to converse with them in the first place. Having been persuaded that these theologies have something to offer to the debate, I need to heed this warning and acknowledge that there will be very different experiences amongst Readers which will be influenced by age, gender, location and the nature of the teams they are working in. I could make the assumption that Readers are a less diverse group than the whole of the female gender, due to a common response to a sense of vocation and a similar path of discernment and training. I suspect, however, that when I begin to speak in depth with a variety of Readers from different backgrounds, traditions and genders that this assumption will be proved misguided. As a result I need to be constantly aware of generalisations and the potential for exclusion in the methodology and interpretation of data in any research involving Readers recounting their personal experiences. It will be important not to seek uniformity for the sake of attempting to create a unity. Wisdom's moods (Ford, 2007) and the poetic use of language beyond words (Kuschel, 1997) combine here with Pears' advice that "unity that forsakes the reality of the diversity of experience is

of no real value in terms of the vision and effectiveness of feminist theologies as contextual liberation theologies" (Pears, 2010 p.98). Neither Readers nor Priests nor those amongst whom we minister will find liberation without honest engagement with real stories.

Feminist, and more recently womanist (predominantly a black American feminism) and mujerista (a theology arising from the situation of Latina/Hispanic women) all address issues of power and dominance and all aim to liberate the women to whom they give voice. The fact that discreet theologies are growing out of different cultural contexts, however, suggests that the desire to be contextual liberation theologies offering empowerment and liberation for all women has not been fulfilled, and maybe never can be without creating uniformity rather than unity. Pears identifies the apparent reluctance of these theologies "to acknowledge diversity and in particular diversities of oppression" and their failure to understand the "interrelated and interlocking forms of injustice" (ibid p.108) as their major weaknesses. Nevertheless, my initial concerns about feminist theologies have been put into a wider perspective of theologies which have more inclusive and reformist voices within their scholars and have something to offer to the debate about power, justice and transformation. Brought, in future papers, into further conversation with the literature on theopoetics and wisdom theologies they will be informative and challenging.

My expectation prior to this reading was that poetics would lead me to an understanding of metaphor as a pedagogical tool. In fact my conversation with the work of Kuschel created in me a sense of hope, a desire to encourage those I teach to dare to go beyond words, to engage with a sense of awe and responsibility associated with a ministry of the word.

Wisdom literature I expected to offer me a framework with which to interpret the taught components of the course for our students. In fact I was challenged to hear the depth of humanity's cries and to acknowledge the need to encourage students to become fluent in the language of their context and culture so that, out of a deepened desire to know God, we will be able to communicate something of that understanding to the world in which we live.

I thought that I would learn from feminist theology a way of hearing the narratives of those who feel unheard. I actually found a desire to hear all voices

and received a personal challenge to dare to say publicly what I hear to honour those who will contribute to this conversation and in the hope that, by communicating in a way that is influenced by poetics and Wisdom, what is said might be truly liberating.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Beginning with the process of pastoral theology as attention (Leach, 2007) enabled me to hear the voices that are significant in my environment and to recognise a desire to seek further conversations with scholarly voices in the fields of poetics, wisdom and liberation theologies.

Having become aware of this direction, Kuschel, Ford and Pears have begun to help me to make connections between these disciplines. The poetic takes us beyond word to that which cannot be expressed - to depths of silence and struggle and out the other side to succinct heart-and-sould-felt expressions of that which cannot be left unsaid (to a deepened relationship with Christ, the Living Word). Wisdom hears and attends to the cries of our generation bringing them into that deep poetic silence before applying the theories of liberation theology which may enable the liberation of those who minister (ordained and lay) and those who receive ministry. These three have the potential to create a cycle of reflective practice; enhancing, deepening, clarifying and freeing each other and those who work within their liberating framework.

This conversation has only just begun.

My next step is to conduct a small-scale research project in which I aim to hear individual voices of people in Reader ministry and to conduct a number of conversations in the form of focus groups among students and Readers. I need to hear what they have to say about their sense of vocation and the realities of being ministers of the word in the Church of England today.

I will then attempt to relate what I hear to a further conversation with the poetic wise and liberating theologies.

Where that will lead I do not yet know - and do not want to anticipate as I have no intention of hearing what I expect to hear, but desire to be taken by surprise

and then to honour those who have shared their narratives with me by asking the questions that emerge from "the contingent theological wisdom of those who are doing the narrating" (Johnson, 2003).

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Appendix 2: Paper 2

**When words meet The Word:
The Poetry at the Heart of Pastoral Ministry**

Paper 2

7003 words

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Abstract

This paper is written, in the most part, as an article as if for submission for publication. The introduction and conclusion place it in the context of the wider research involved in the DProf in Pastoral Theology. Particular reference is made to the poetic processes as they relate to the skills of pastoral ministry of word. The work of Gerard Manley Hopkins informs consideration of how ministry of word might be perceived as transcendent and creating interpersonal/relational sacred space. Recommendations for further research form the overall conclusion beyond that of the 'publishable article'.

Key words: Ministry, Reader, ministry of word, poetic, theopoetics, Gerard Manley Hopkins, inscape, instress, relational sacred space, hermeneutic phenomenology.

Introduction

This paper serves two purposes. The bulk of the words are presented as an article written as if for submission for publication in the journal Practical Theology. As such it is limited to 6000 words and is single spaced, conforming to the journal's presentation protocols. The rest of the paper introduces that article and makes recommendations for further research. This will be followed up in the next stages of the DProf; the research proposal and thesis. The article has been influenced by peer feedback to its circulation and a presentation based on aspects of its content. The main changes made as a result of that feedback have been to signpost more clearly the concepts of poetic structure as opposed to use of poetry and to consider more practical implications of this work to ministry.

My understanding of myself in the research context has been enhanced by writing this paper. I had previously thought that my thesis would concentrate on the experience and practice of Readers in parish ministry. Having worked with my own story as part of the focus of this paper I feel more confident to concentrate further research on concepts rather than practicalities. It has been valuable to make this shift in focus before the submission of my research proposal.

The article is presented with its own abstract. This is different from the overall abstract above as it is not related to the whole research project. The bibliography is situated after the concluding paragraphs of the paper to allow it to include references in the conclusion as well as in the article. For submission purposes this would simply be edited appropriately.

When words meet The Word.
The poetry at the heart of pastoral ministry.

Abstract: This article draws on the work of the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins and those who have written about his concepts of inscape and instress. It considers how an awareness of poetic processes might enhance the pastoral experience of those in ministry and in receipt of ministry of word. It also considers how skills might be taught to, and utilised by, those in ministry that would allow pastoral encounters to transcend the mundane and enable the experience of relational sacred space. Particular reference is made to Reader Ministry in the Church of England as the author's own ministry context and a specific ministry of word.

Key words: Ministry, Reader, ministry of word, poetic, theopoetics, Gerard Manley Hopkins, inscape, instress, relational sacred space.

Introduction

Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves - goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,
Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.*
(Hopkins G.M. in T. Crofts, ed. 1995:36)

I have a longing.

As a Reader in the Church of England I am very much part of the structures of our national church. Teaching on a course offering education (academic and formational) for those entering ordained or licensed lay ministries places me even more firmly inside that institution; an institution whose public image has not had its best year. I am committed to working within this institution. I bring to that sense of belonging all that makes me who I am. Within this institutional context I find myself asking questions that weave their way through many aspects of my life - my childhood passion for story, my young adult love of poetry, my early professional life as a therapist and my ministry within the church of the 21st century. To have the opportunity to share with others something of what makes me who I am - the "ontological secret" at the heart of my being to use the words of Pick (1942) is daunting and exciting in equal measure. To consider concepts that relate equally to my own personal story, my ministry and my professional experience is challenging, but possible.

My longing is to communicate these deeply personal, and yet potentially significant themes (with the capacity to go way beyond my own story and work) in a way that is at the same time personally honest and academically rigorous. This paper is an attempt at that synthesis. It is written with the intention of exploring the ways in which the human capacity for communication through the medium of language might be consciously related to the practice of ministry. I hope to identify ways in which those who minister might become more confident in their ability to accompany others in pastoral situations. My intention is to find transferrable skills from the disciplines which study language usage to enhance the ministry of word offered by those in formal and informal ministry settings. This, in turn, will be a way of allowing those who are ministered to, as well as those who minister, to know a little more confidently that of which Hopkins says "What I do is me: for that I came".

Language development has fascinated observers throughout history. Linguistically its stages have been analysed and defined. From the first single words uttered to the complexities of adult language there are codes and rules to categorise all uses of language and the many disorders of development (Dale, 1976). It is possible to quantify this human skill and many scholars have spent their lives doing so. This work is of immense value when considering how we use language in different environments and how damaged language functions might be repaired. Much of my own working life has been spent in the realms of such an understanding. For this paper, however, I will concentrate on the crafting of that language and the relationships that it enables. I want to find some answers to the question: what happens in those times when there is an awareness that a conversation has gone beyond a sharing of words and become a sharing of space and time in which human words have met with something of The Word of God? Rausch (2003:85) describes these times as experiences of that "mysterious depth of goodness, love, compassion and presence that we call God". The space that can be created to enable such an encounter may be termed interpersonal, or relational, sacred space. It is not place-dependent but is dependent on the ability of one person to meet another in their need or their joy in a way that creates trust through integrity. But more than that, in a theological sense, this trust then allows for the acceptance that we "are always already within the divine embrace" (O'Donohue, 2003:237). Somehow we are enabled to transcend the personal and experience something of the numinous; a sense of awe and mystery associated with 'the Holy' (Otto, 1968). I would, though, like to express that thought slightly differently and say that such space enables an experience of the pneumenous; a personal, energising sense of the presence of the Spirit; the breath of God forming the words used and thus transforming the space in which they are used. From the answers that emerge I then aim to identify skills that might be developed and taught to all involved in practical ministry. The aim being to enhance the skills of those engaged in a ministry of word so that interpersonal contact might be transformed, creating something more than the meeting of two people.

These things, these things were here and but the beholder
Wanting; which two when they once meet,
The heart rears wings bold and bolder
And hurls for him, O half hurls earth for him off under his feet.
(Hopkins G.M. In T. Crofts, ed. 1995:19)

This process, for me, is closely linked with poetic usage of language and so the relatively recently named discipline of theopoetics will inform this work. I will also make particular reference to the work of Gerard Manley Hopkins and his concepts of 'inscape' and 'instress' in order to consider how his work might guide this process. Before I consider this work in detail, though, it feels important to set it in a number of contexts in order that the motivation behind the content of this paper might be transparent and understood.

My personal context.

I am, first and foremost a linguist, a phonetician and a therapist. As a result of my professional and spiritual walk through life I now find myself writing from a

theological perspective. The professional skills, insights and expertise gained so far inform all that I now bring to my role in ministry training. I work as part of a team delivering a course of study to Anglican Ordinands and Reader students. My major responsibility is that of pastoral theology in the context of local ministry and the formational aspects of our students' training. This role has grown out of my own personal and professional past.

All of my conscious life I have had a sense that the world of words is where I belong, where I am truly myself. In such a context I relate personally to Hopkins' words quoted in the opening poem: 'for that I came'. As a very young child I loved the different worlds experienced through the characters in stories. As a natural introvert and happy as a 'loner', reading and composing stories became my way of finding self-identity and self-expression. I began to discover the 'ontological secret' (Pick, 1942) at the heart of my own being. A lifelong passion for words, a desire for all to experience the power of communication through written and spoken word and a sense of vocation to ministry led me first to a career as a Speech and Language Therapist, then to training as a counsellor and later to licensed lay ministry as a Reader in the Church of England.

Counselling taught me of the need for creation of a space in which therapist and client can experience "congruence, unconditional positive regard and empathic understanding" (Rogers, 1951). Regardless of the content of therapy sessions, these conditions can enable a healing process to begin. Within a pastoral ministry this ability relates to many encounters. Words are essential in the formation of such a space, but so is something more. This was most powerfully experienced during my eight years working as a chaplain in a women's prison. Here I was privileged to work with women from many nations and traditions in a raw and often volatile environment where I became increasingly aware of the power of words to heal and hurt. And here I discovered the power of words to create a space in which the world of pain and violence was transformed. Sometimes that space would be within the chapel complex, where it might be possible to expect to experience 'sacred space'. But often it would be in the segregation unit with a woman on 'suicide watch' with an officer present twenty-four hours a day. The words that stay with me most powerfully are those of a persistent self-harmer: "while I'm telling you my story I don't need to hurt myself". It has been suggested that pre-linguistic understanding is of there being no distinction between the inner and outer world. What we have at our disposal pre-linguistically is the experience of pleasure and pain (Kristeva, 1982). Within the extreme world of the prison I realised that a child who is not helped by the adults in her life to create the distinction, the boundaries, between the inner and the outer world, is placed at greater risk later in life of not being able to use narrative to express inner pain. This may lead to the need to express inner pain as a physical pain in the act of self-harm. Most of ministry will not be involved with such extreme examples, but Turp (2003) identifies many 'normal' behaviours such as overwork and extreme dieting as forms of hidden self-harm. These are the lived experiences of many of the people both offering and receiving ministry in today's world.

Furthermore, there are a number of theories suggesting that we only form an understanding of 'self' through narrative (Mead, 1934; Angus and McLeod, 2004; Hutto, 2007; Goldie, 2007; Strawson, 2007), conceiving of our own existence as "a special story and not as a physical or mental

thing" (Polkinghorne, 1988). It may even be that writing that story offers us a state of "disconnection" from day to day life which is, in itself "healing, enabling connections to be made with a range of voices that make up the 'self' and the world in which writers find themselves" (Bolton, 2004). My own childhood experience leads me to agree with these observations. This experience, along with the influence of some inspirational English teachers, was to shape my life and subsequently my own practice of ministry.

Ministry of the word is many-faceted. It is often described in terms of preaching and formal teaching. It is, however, also about creating space for others' words to be heard and respected. It is about offering words that may challenge, but in their challenge may allow truth to bring healing. It is about teaching the faith and teaching skills so that others might gain a deeper understanding of faith. It is about enabling others to hear their own voice in the midst of often very loud scripts that they have carried throughout their lives. I would argue that formation for a ministry of word will be enhanced if it is able to exhibit a depth of understanding of the disciplines relating to development, use and function of words in our everyday life. This may be said to be true of therapeutic encounters and counselling relationships but contains the added dimension of consciously seeking to create space for God to be experienced in the encounter. This intention would be counter-productive (and even unacceptable) in many therapeutic relationships. Within the context of ministry, this understanding can then lead to the skills that enable words to transform normal encounters into encounters with God through the experience of that interpersonal sacred space. To this end my own experience of the past four decades or more places me in what may be a unique position from which to bring insights from a number of perspectives into a new synthesis.

Reader ministry as my practical ministry context.

I have been a licensed Reader for twelve years. A Reader is an episcopally licensed, theologically educated, lay minister. A more specific definition is hard to come by, although the term 'lay theologian' is being increasingly used (Paterson, 2011, Daunt, 2012). Daunt says

By theology I mean quite literally 'God talk'. I use the term theologian to refer to a person who has acquired the habit of theological reflection, who at the end of each day is able to ask 'where has God been in all this?' and, at least sometimes, to find an answer.

This, therefore, is the context in which I interpret ministry of the word. Whilst I would not want to limit what I say to this specific ministry, I do feel it is important to own my identity as a minister of the word in a licensed capacity. I also wish to give voice to some of the ways in which that identity might be strengthened for those who have a specific ministry of word; not least because Reader ministry varies considerably in practice from parish to parish and the identity of the role is unclear. Literature searches for works on Reader ministry result in sparse resources being identified. Where Reader ministry has been written about

(Rowling and Gooder, 2009) the emphasis has been on what a Reader can do in the parish as opposed to what might be the ontological core of a Reader's vocation. In my own time in ministry as a Reader I have had many conversations with people involved in vocational advice, selection for ministry and those in ministry, both lay and ordained. These conversations leave me with a sense that many people define Reader ministry in negative terms. A Reader is not a priest. A Reader student is not an ordinand. A Reader does not have a vocation to sacramental ministry. And so the list could continue. Anecdotally, however, I am aware of many Readers in my own diocese who identify themselves positively as those whose role is in line with Daunt's definition of lay theologian. They are people with a ministry of the word, who have a strong sense of vocation to this particular ministry and who offer it in a way that is deeply spiritual, pastoral and transformational.

Words are symbols. Particularly when written, but I would argue also when spoken. A word is "a thing that represents or stands for something else"; a symbol, as defined by the Oxford online dictionary. Spoken words symbolise factual information. They also communicate more abstract concepts. Communication through the medium of the spoken word also allows rhythm, silence and tone to add to the symbolic representation of the subject being conveyed. Readers are intuitively, and often professionally, using form, structure and content of language to enrich their ministries. If Reader ministry is to flourish it is important that those involved in selection, training and ministering recognise its value and have the confidence to discern and train those coming forward with a sense of vocation as preachers and teachers. It is also important to seek to understand what defines the most effective of such ministries. As I said in my introduction, I am interested to discover how this ministry of word might be developed by an understanding of these processes of language and communication which take those who offer and receive them beyond the words used to a deeper encounter with self, others and God. In this way ministry of the word is not only a function of the Reader's church role; something offered from the pulpit or in formal classes, but is something that happens in every encounter. It also forms part of the ministry of the whole body of the church; Priests, Readers and lay disciples with no licensed, authorised ministry. It is with this in mind that I intend to write for a wider context but to bear in mind the origins of this subject in my own Reader ministry context when applying insights to the practicalities of education and formation for ministry.

Theology and poetics.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

(John 1:1)

The term theopoetics has been used to refer to a way of using words to give a particular, devotional quality to their meaning. It has become synonymous with a genre of religious writing and offers a postmodern perspective on theology. It attempts to make God known through text. The theopoetic text is therefore one that reveals an aspect of the divine; one that creates, through its words, an experience of the sacred. The etymology of the term combines the Greek 'theo' with 'poiein' meaning "to make or shape". Theopoetics may then be said to be a

crafting of words resulting in the shaping of an experience of the divine (Wilder, 2001). To study theopoetics in the context of ministry of the word is to further consider how people might experience 'sacred space', an encounter with 'The Word', regardless of the physical space in which the encounter takes place. Sacred Space is defined by the Dictionary of Complimentary and Alternative Medicine as "space—tangible or otherwise—that enables those who acknowledge and accept it to feel reverence and connection with the spiritual" (Jonas 2005). The suggestion that the space need not be tangible supports my thinking that wherever we are the space can be perceived as sacred. Taking this definition out of the postmodern setting, there are many writers and poets whose work has, either openly or intrinsically, had such an aim or affect. For me, the most significant of those poets has always been Gerard Manley Hopkins. As such I intend to concentrate on aspects of his work to frame my thinking.

Give beauty back, beauty, beauty, beauty
back to God, beauty's
self and beauty's giver.

(Hopkins G.M. In T. Crofts, ed. 1995:37)

The kairos moment of my own youth came when studying A Level English. We were expected to develop critical skills of engagement with Hopkins' poetry. Through his poetry I was freed to question faith whilst at the same time engaging deeply with the beauty and grandeur of the world around me. I began to sense that I was part of creation, in relationship with other created things and with a message that only I could communicate ('What I do is me: for that I came'). Hopkins' influence was significant through the sprung rhythm of his poetry and his concepts of inscape; "the objective reality that exists independent of the beholder" and instress; "partly the response of the beholder and partly the force of being which links the object and the beholder" (Ballinger, 2000:54). Words in poetic form gave access to a sense of the divine that had to do with Hopkins' desire "to communicate an 'inscaped Christ' that may then be 'instressed' in the hearer" (ibid: 229). All of this depends upon relational contacts which reach beyond the immediate encounter. And so the theology underpinning a concept of sacred space encountered through ministry of word will not only be of a theopoetic nature but will also be relational.

Relational theology is not about fully understanding or adequately imagining anything. It is a poetry that sparks and spins us, through our experiences, imaginations and cognitive faculties, through what we do well, what we do poorly and what we do not do at all, through what we see and what we do not see, what we say and what we do not say. Relational theology is a poetry that invites us to live a little more fully in right-relation with another in this world at this time.

(Heyward, 2010)

Ministry is rooted in relationships. Whether or not theology as an academic subject can stand in isolation of relationships, the theology that forms the basis on which ministry is built will speak more potently to each person and situation if it engages with Heyward's 'relational' and 'poetic' theology. Hopkins, and in particular his concepts of 'inscape' and 'instress', offers the possibility of bringing to these poetic and relational qualities an analysis of what is happening

when this sacred space is perceived and potentially, in time, some suggestions of skills that might be encouraged, and developed, in those whose ministry is primarily that of word.

Gerard Manley Hopkins.

As a background to these concepts, and to understand how his work relates to that which we now term 'theopoetics', it is necessary to consider something of Hopkins' wider context and theological position. Writing with particular reference to the artistic, philosophical and theological influences on Hopkins, Ballinger states that

with assistance of the Spiritual Exercises, Hopkins created the beginnings of a synthesis between delight in beauty and selfless dedication to God, between aesthetic experience and the experience of the Logos as the meaning-giving and 'beautiful' centre of creation.

(Ballinger, 2000:70).

It is the latter of these syntheses, between the "aesthetic experience" and experiencing the "Logos as the meaning-giving and 'beautiful' centre of creation" that I would argue is important and informative in the practice of formation for a ministry of the word (the logos). It is this synthesis that will enable people's experience of 'ministry of the word' to transcend syntax and semantics. The question is, how might this "meaning-giving and beautiful centre" be accessed and then communicated to others? Ballinger claims that Hopkins "held that we are created through God's self-utterance, the Word" (ibid: 75). It is this conceptual basis for his theology that I believe makes his voice invaluable in considering the theological basis for the practice of a ministry of the word, with all of its potential for pastoral expression. It is this theology, combined with the poet's craft, that I will argue offers us the beginnings of an answer to how meaning-giving and beauty might be offered through ministry of word. In his *Journals and Papers* (ed. House, 1959:298) Hopkins states that inscape can be caught and communicated through "speech framed to carry the inscape". Hopkins is referring to the spoken, not the written word. There is something about hearing words which brings life in a way that reading to oneself does not. For Hopkins this was about poetry, but it could be argued that this intention for speech - a poetic intent to convey the incarnational aspects of faith - is an essential component of any ministry of the word. Whether the speech is in the form of a sermon, a formal teaching session or a conversation, it is possible for the speaker's intention to be to carry the inscape of the incarnated Word. Whilst this concept may be similar to that of the sacramental priestly ministry, that is not my understanding of the sacredness of the words that take us beyond the mundane. Having said that, this ministry may form a significant part of any priest's day to day ministry.

Returning to Ballinger, he has argued that Hopkins did in fact see the poem as a sacrament: that he considered the poem not only to represent Christ, but in some way to actually be Christ. By his own admission it was with "some extrapolation" that he held "that Hopkins' theological aesthetic may be specifically developed into a view of the poem as sacrament" (Ballinger, 2000: 224). Pick's view that Hopkins had a "sacramental view of nature" (1942:7), in that God can be seen, and encountered, in all of creation seems to be more rigorously arguable. It does not attribute the sense of what he has created (the poem) being actual sacrament to Hopkins without the evidence in his own

writing. Ballinger's background and current academic post link him strongly with the present day Jesuit academic world - one that would more readily speak of Christ's actual presence in sacrament than other theological and spiritual traditions would sit comfortably with.

Heuser (1958) suggests that

Hopkins desired 'that sense beyond', an inspired or infused faith to kindle sensation into spiritual intuition and to renew the face of the earth beneath the Light of Light. Then eternal morning would burst over creation reborn as an earthly paradise, the naturalistic ideal would be supernaturalized by the presence of the Creator himself. (p13).

This interpretation of Hopkins' intention is very close to that of the poem as sacrament, but in Heuser's writing it is the Creator, not Christ who is present. Ballinger's interpretation of the poem as sacrament is a tantalising one, but one for which I can find no firm evidence in Hopkins' own writings or in others' interpretations of his intention. I therefore choose to work with the sense of the poem offering the opportunity for sacred encounter and therefore containing form and skill that make such a use of words accessible to all. This is not to argue that the production of a poem is the only way to encourage sacred encounter through word. I would suggest, though, that close attention to the processes and concepts involved in producing the poem might enhance everyday use of language as a tool in pastoral ministerial encounter.

Inscape and Instress.

Amongst these concepts are inscape and instress. Hopkins did not, in his journals or his notebooks, define inscape or instress. The first mention of inscape and instress is found in a notebook dated February 1868. He is writing a paper about the philosopher Parmenides in which he says:

His feeling for instress, for the flush and foredrawn, and for inscape / is most striking and from this one can understand Plato's reverence for him as the great father of Realism.

(ed. House, 1959)

The very natural way in which he uses these terms suggests that they are already well established in his own thinking (and maybe he has spoken of them with others before writing of them) and they need no specific explanation. Many scholars writing about Hopkins have attempted to explain them and time will now be given to consider their contributions to this work. One such scholar is W.A.M. Peters, a Jesuit, writing in 1948. In his book simply entitled *Gerard Manley Hopkins* he quotes two letters written by Hopkins; one in 1879 to Bridges and the other written in 1886 to Patmore in which he mentions inscape. The concept had clearly become part of Hopkins' continued way of thinking about his work since the first mention some eleven years before the writing of the first of these letters. Peters continues to say that "Hopkins confessed inscape to be the very aim of his poetry" (1948:1). After much study of the many places in which the word inscape occurs, Peters develops a definition. Referring to Hopkins' habit of looking at objects with "fixed determination" to discover what is distinctive about that particular thing he infers

that '*in-scape*' is the outward reflection of the *inner* nature of a thing, or a sensible copy or representation of its individual essence; and thus I define it as the unified complex of those sensible qualities of an object that strike us as inseparably belonging to and most typical of that object, so that through the knowledge of this unified complex of sense-data we may gain an insight into the individual essence of the object. (ibid:2)

He goes on to say that
it was his spiritual outlook on this world that made inscape so precious to Hopkins; the inscape of an object was, so to speak, more 'word of God', reminding him more of the Creator, than a superficial impression could have done." (ibid:6)

In the slighter earlier writings of John Pick, the emphasis given to inscape is very much on beauty:

...that inscape meant much more than external design or pattern is clear from passages in which the expression is connected with the inner kernel of being.... Sometimes he stresses "inscape" as configuration, design, shape, pattern, and contour - the "outer form" of a thing; sometimes he stresses "inscape" as the ontological secret behind a thing, as the "inner form". But usually he employs the word to indicate the essential individuality and particularity or "selfhood" of a thing working itself out and expressing itself in design and pattern. This he then calls beauty. (1942:33)

It is this definition that makes the ability to consider, and recognise, the inscape (the 'ontological secret') of a thing, or more particularly a person, a potentially powerful pastoral tool. Peters disagrees with this emphasis on beauty, although not with the concept itself. He wants his readers to consider beauty as only part of the story. It seems to me to be important, though, to hold to this as a starting point in the development of the observational skills that enable an awareness of the depth of 'inscape' of a created object.

A phrase used on a number of occasions by Pick when speaking about inscape is that it is the 'ontological secret' of an objects innermost being.

I do not think I have ever seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of our Lord by it. Its inscape is mixed of strength and grace. (Hopkins, 1870 in House, 1959: 199)

To find a way of discerning this 'ontological secret' in every encounter, and then to transform the encounter into one that acknowledges "the beauty of our Lord by it", may be an overly ambitious hope. An ability to begin to look closely and find something of that secret which can access the beauty at the centre of all created beings may not be. It is this ability that I would suggest marks out ministry of word that moves into an encounter with the divine.

Another of Hopkins' concepts is that of instress. This understanding of that word is offered to us by Pick:

instress is a word that (Hopkins) attached to the intensity of feeling and associations which something beautiful brought to him and a desire to convert it to God.

(1942:32)

Where inscape speaks of the essential make-up of the created thing, instress speaks of its impact on another. Inscape can be described; instress cannot - it can only be expressed as an impression. These words of Peters highlight the complexity of attempting to grasp something of the meaning of instress:

The starting point in trying to get its precise meaning will be the use of the noun 'stress', which in Hopkins's philosophical writings stands for the perfection of being, proper to a thing" and "The preference of 'stress' to 'act', the normal word in scholastic terminology, most likely finds its reason in the greater expressiveness of the Saxon word, 'stress' well marking the force which keeps a thing in existence and its strain after continued existence. The noun 'instress' adds little to this meaning of stress except in so far as the prefix emphasises that this force is intrinsic to the thing.....Inscape, being a sensitive manifestation of a being's individuality, is perceived by the senses; but instress, though given in the perception of inscape, is not directly perceived by the senses, because it is not a primary sensible quality of the thing. (1948:13,14)

At this point in writing I am tempted to say that only inscape is important for my purposes and to ignore instress, but this would be to deny that which it is impossible to describe and therefore demands careful attention in preference for that which, with time and concentration, can be described. I would not be showing respect to Hopkins, those who have sought to understand him, the theology that underpins his work or those who I intend to interview and to enable as a result of a longer term, wider-reaching, piece of research. Instress, therefore, is an important concept even if there are few ways of expressing its affect other than through many, and varied, qualitative expressions. Peters points out later in his work that Hopkins, when he is concentrating on theological writing rather than philosophy, uses the term 'instress' as almost synonymous with 'feeling'. Not the feelings that are related to mood, however, but those that arise from contact with the inscape of an object (ibid:16,17). In psychodynamic terms he seems to be describing the phenomenon known as 'object relations' which relates to an "internal world of relations between self and other, and the ways in which others have become part of the self" (Flanagan, 2011:118). To be able to recognise feelings relating to 'ontological secrets', the very being of a person, which go beyond words and behaviours has the potential to enhance the pastoral experience. This in turn allows those in the encounter to move more deeply into that sacred space created by such recognition and honouring of the core of a person's being.

By close, solitary, contemplative examination of this world, Hopkins seems to have come into a deeper relationship with God. His awareness of creation leads him to an understanding of Christ. This is then expressed through the use of language designed to communicate that understanding to others. The inscape of each thing expresses something of the One who created it which is experienced by the observer as instress. A legacy of Hopkins' work is that it is possible to have an awareness of the possibilities of encounters which acknowledge inscape and instress. Hopkins' voice from the late nineteenth century resonates deeply with the post-modern writings in theopoetics.

Conclusion

The crafting of words which results in an experience of the divine (Wilder, 2001) is what Hopkins' expressions of inscape and instress aim to offer through his poetry. It is not realistic to think that everyone is capable of being as aware as Hopkins. It is not possible for many people to dedicate so much time to looking closely and deeply at individual objects. Ministry of word that begins to engage with these concepts, though, may offer the beginnings of a reverence for all things as representative of God himself and thus offer a relational theology to underpin the pastoral skills involved in such a ministry. There are many practical implications of such an awareness. They may involve creative use of physical space to best allow people to hear and share their stories. They may relate to use of language, rhythm or word order which intentionally challenges, comforts or affirms. They may relate to encounters in church, in the post office, the street, a home or in hospital. Whatever and wherever ministry is practiced, at its heart this ministry involves the processes behind the poetry - the desire to look intently, to find the inscape of our world and communities, and to be willing to respond to the feelings generated by the instress in ways that are intended to be transformative and to incarnate Christ in our world. I would suggest a strong link between pastoral and relational theologies, the practice of ministry of word and a theopoetic approach to our understanding of the power of word. This approach is, in part, based on the work of Wilder (2001:12) who says that theopoetics is about expressions of joy and transcendence but also engages deeply and honestly with suffering and depth. Ministry in a world where images of suffering on a global scale are accessible daily (and in real time) must be able to speak to the realities of life as well as to point to the beauty and grandeur of creation.

If inscape and instress have anything to teach us today, their ability to express pain as well as joy has to be accepted and explored. Hopkins was not afraid of giving voice to his anger and doubts

No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs,
wilder wrings.
Comforter where, where is your comforting?
Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?
(Hopkins G.M. In T. Crofts, ed. 1995:44)

Contemplation and observation of the world may not be qualities that are very highly prized today. Life is lived at speed and, much of the time, demands fragmented attention. If ministers of the word are to have a prophetic voice, I would argue that something of these skills is required in order that the

'ontological secrets' of the world can be understood, translated and responded to in pastorally appropriate ways.

Overall conclusion and recommendations

This article has concentrated on a specific aspect of ministry of word; that of the poetic process and its potential influence on the pastoral impact of such a ministry. The research into Hopkins' concepts of inscape and instress suggests a possible interpretation for the experience of ministry of word which transcends the human interaction and touches something that is identified as divine. I have attempted to respond to the requests of those who read the paper in its original form to suggest practical responses to these concepts. I am, however, not willing to draw too many conclusions at this stage. It is my intention to allow others to speak and to construct practical responses from what their stories have to teach us. In order to remain true to the desire to hear the stories of those involved in, and receiving, such ministry further research is now necessary. I intend to go on to explore how people experience sacred moments through ministry received or offered and then to relate these experiences to what we can know of relational theology, theopoetics and the craft of the poets who seek to use words to draw people into deeper relationships with God.

At this stage my intention is to carry out research using the method of hermeneutic phenomenology described by Swinton and Mowat (2006:101ff) as a way of exploring personal experiences of ministry that is perceived to have a quality of transcendence. This method allows for the hearing of the story and interpretation and exploration of themes that arise. As a result of the process that evolves I intend to honour these stories by relating the themes they contain to practical, teachable skills.

From this work I have learned the value of close observation, a desire to find the ontological heart of a person and the willingness to seek to communicate what is found in terms of relational and poetic theologies. I have also begun to understand how my own voice might be expressed within an academic, and yet creative, framework. The research that will form the basis of my thesis will need to be true to all of these qualities if it is to authentically investigate the ministry that they represent.

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Appendix 3: Paper 3

Metaphorically Speaking.

**A research proposal for a theopoetic investigation of ministry
of the word as experienced by Church of England Readers.**

Paper 3

7028 words

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Submitted October 2013

S.I.D. 1125548

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Professional Doctorate in Practical Theology with
Cambridge Theological Federation
and Anglia Ruskin University

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Abstract: This paper presents a defence of a research proposal for the consideration of the place of a theopoetic paradigm for ministry of the word in the vocational formation of Reader students. It examines the research methods involved in co-operative inquiry and story-eliciting interviews as part of the overall thesis. The research is intended to inform the author's own practice and to offer new insights into knowledge and understanding of vocational lay ministry of word; its qualities and teaching.

Key words: Reader ministry, vocation, theopoetics, student formation, co-operative inquiry, story.

“The way people speak, dance, build, dream, embellish, is to be sure always culturally particular: it bears the imprint of a time and a place.”
(Stephen Crites, 1971)

Introduction

As a Reader in the Church of England working voluntarily in ministry in a parish and in a paid role in training Reader students, I have become aware of a sense of confusion, even dis-ease, amongst the Reader body. The way Readers speak of themselves and their ministry indicates a lack of a distinct sense of identity. In addition, there is a dearth of material expressing any kind of vocational understanding of this ministry. It is my desire to become more effective in my teaching of the next generation of Readers. In a quest to find information to help me to fulfil that desire, I have realized that it simply is not out there to be found. There are a number of papers, theses and books written about the history, role and practicalities of selection and training of Readers (Garner, 2010, Rowling and Gooder, 2011, Daunt, 2012). This material is valuable but does not address the less tangible, existential nature of what it is to be called to a ministry of word and how that ministry can be encouraged and identifiable values and conditions taught in such a way as to enhance the ministry offered in both church and community settings. As a result, Readers tend to identify themselves functionally rather than vocationally. Anecdotally I am aware of anxiety and dissatisfaction that relates to inclusion in (or being left out of) service leading rotas. Many Readers express a sense of being ‘second class citizens’ in their church’s ministry teams. ‘Vocation’ and ‘discernment’ are terms that, more often than not amongst those involved in selection and training, are used in conversations about ordinands but not about Reader students. My intention is, therefore, to seek the words that belong with the identity of the Reader; what is it that people respond to as a call to a ministry of word? Can this be expressed in a way that is communicable in the classroom?

My own personal vocation is very much tied up with the poetic use of language; language that expresses itself from a place of attention to detail and desiring to express depth, feeling and meaning. I therefore needed to find a way of incorporating my own vocational sense within this academic work. It is really

important to me that anything I produce has an air of authenticity about it. As a result I have struggled to write this paper. I have been putting myself under pressure to conform to an academic style that is not my own. While I have wrestled with my material, trying to squeeze it into a language that I hear others using I have returned time and time again to one question; can I really need to produce a piece of work simply to prove that I can think and write at a certain level? Whilst the answer to this question, in part, has to be 'yes', it needs to be acknowledged that there is so much more at stake than that. My whole being seems to be involved in this doctorate in a way that I could not have considered possible two years ago. But if that is the case, I need to find a way of communicating the importance of my subject that is not only acceptable academically but is also true to its very nature. A professional doctorate has to be about my practice. My practice, I have come to realize, is tied up with my very existence. My theology and my life's work have grown out of an ongoing relationship with the work of two significant poets; Gerard Manley Hopkins and, more recently, John O'Donohue. Both of these poets are theologians who express their understanding of God and the world through their art born of careful observation and crafting of words. If I am to be true to my own story as well as to a desire to communicate academically I must find my way through a maze of research methodologies emerging from, and informing, the discipline of practical theology. Finding the work of those involved in the field of poetic inquiry has been like finding a deep seam of gold which I intend to mine and craft as a way of expressing that which I believe is buried in the stories and experiences of those in practice as Readers and in my own story.

Potential contribution to knowledge and practice.

My hope for this work is that it will contribute to knowledge and understanding by hearing and voicing the experiences of Readers relating to their sense of calling and vocation. I also hope to contribute to the fields of action research and poetic inquiry by combining a cooperative research project with poetic analysis and taking the understanding gained into my own teaching practice. In the formulation of a theopoetic paradigm out of which ministry of word can be described and practiced, this work will contribute an original perspective on

Reader ministry. As a result of my own intention to improve my teaching practice I will, hopefully, be able to contribute to the understanding at a national level of the qualities and conditions desirable for formation for Reader ministry that honour and value the vocational nature of this distinctive ministry of word in the Church of England. The practical research element of this study is to be carried out with Readers from my own diocese. The reasons for this decision are explained below. As a result, a report of the findings from that locally rooted part of the project will have the potential to inform understanding and practice in this diocese before the completion of the doctoral thesis.

Liminality and deepest desires.

This paper is located at a threshold. In the DProf process it marks a transition from Stage 1 to Stage 2. It has grown out of, and contains insights from, two earlier papers but it also turns attention towards the major work of the thesis to come. It is being written in the midst of change at work and in my personal life. Liminality seems to have become normal. Recognizing this contradictory state, I realize that my motivation for beginning this research also stems from a long term positioning of myself in what I now understand to be a liminal environment. As a Church of England Reader I am licensed in public ministry but lay. Much of my ministry has been amongst women in prison and their stories inform my understanding of practical theology although I no longer physically occupy that particular liminal environment. I work now amongst women and men training for ministry in the Church of England. My role bridges the academic and the practical components of formation for ministry with, and on behalf of, our students. Liminality is definitely my norm.

Almost nine years ago another threshold experience took place; my first Ignatian retreat. Five days of silence and the Bible. Five days of guidance with the ever-present question “What is your deepest desire?”

Five days that led me to a realization that my deepest desire (that which helps me to discern my God-given purpose) is inextricably linked with my whole-life love of words. In practice this love of words has taken me into therapeutic and ministerial roles which have focused on enabling others to find words; to express their innermost feelings or to be able to communicate at the most basic

levels after catastrophic brain injury or disease. This has been my life work. It has often involved the inhabiting of liminal places and roles. On this retreat I realised that my Reader ministry in the Church of England is also part of this vocational engagement with words. My ministry of word, though, is also motivated by the desire to enable others to experience something of The Word - the Word of God, made known through the incarnational life and ministry of Jesus. As a Christian minister this transcendent experience of the power of words to liberate and transform lives became my focus. This was a kairos moment; a moment in time when what had gone before and what was yet to come seemed to meet and call me to see that my professional and vocational identities were, in Aristotelian terms, simply different expressions of the essence of my being. This moment took me into simultaneous experiences of liminality as both threshold (new awareness and possibility) and gap (as a lay person in public ministry and between the mundane and the transcendent).

The sense that my deepest desire was being focused on that retreat was expressed in the words of a poem, which I now realize was the beginning of an awareness that has led me to another deep desire. This time my desire is to understand the processes that are at work when people experience a vocation to a distinctive ministry of the word. It is my belief that such a ministry is often experienced as opening up encounters that go beyond the human relationship and is acknowledged as enabling a divine encounter with The Word (John 1:1). I am interested in what happens to create experiences of ministry that transcend the everyday use of words and touch something of the Divine. Something in the heart, the gut, the spirit, recognizes a truth that is not confined to, but communicated within the meaning behind the words being spoken:

Dove-gentle, love-filling
Soul-affirming
Resurrection words.

Searching the centre
meet angels
where self once lived alone.

(extract from the poem written on retreat).

If I am to understand this experience and find out to what extent it is a shared and transferable expression of ministry of word, I need to hear from others. I am seeking after qualities and the language with which to describe those qualities and cannot do that alone.

Influence of Papers 1 and 2

This need creates another threshold. The writing of the first two papers in the DProf process has clarified my own theological and practical paradigms. This has, so far, been expressed for scrutiny only by my supervisor and examiners. I am now proposing to test out some of these thoughts with colleagues. What I have realized is that my theology of ministry is predominantly a theology of presence; presence with God, presence to oneself, presence with others, presence in a particular place and within a particular time-frame. This theology is rooted in practice as a Reader in the Church of England in a ministry of word that seeks to listen attentively to the experiences of individuals and to world issues. Pastorally this involves offering people space to express their feelings, questions, sorrows and joys knowing that they have been attended to carefully. Sometimes advice is sought, sometimes interpretation is helpful. Often presence is all that is needed. The preaching and teaching of ministry of the word require further action. Interpretation, insights and possible futures are expressed often through the media of metaphor and symbolic language.

My own practice of ministry resonates deeply with Gerard Manley Hopkins' practices of presence leading to poetic expressions that describe, interpret and challenge. Hopkins' concepts of inscape, instress and selving (House, 1959) have become significant in my own understanding and teaching of students who are preparing for a ministry of word. It is my belief that these concepts, given to us by a distinguished wordsmith and theologian, can form the basis for our understanding of the conditions and values necessary for effective, vocational Reader ministry. I desire to encourage Readers to see themselves as wordsmiths, crafts people - those who incarnate the living Word. Each individual will interpret that identity in practical terms very differently from any other because "as kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame.... Each one dwells;

Selves - goes itself, myself it speaks and spells, Crying 'What I do is me'. For that I came" (From As Kingfishers Catch Fire by G. M. Hopkins)

Feedback from the first two papers indicates a need to be more clearly rooted in practice. My tendency is to generalize and to leave others to interpret my conceptual work in their own practice. This tendency can be traced to years of training and practice in non-directive, person-centred, counselling techniques but it is not helpful in a practice-based research project. It is clear that I now need to hear very specific stories which will enable my conceptual model of ministry of word as a poetic process to be taken from, and rooted in, practice.

Research Question

Papers 1 and 2 have highlighted the need for specificity. My research question needs to relate to my own practice and to bring together the possibility of new discoveries in both theory and practice. I am therefore framing my overall question in this way:

"Exploring the possibilities offered by a theopoetic paradigm for ministry of the word to the vocational formation of student Readers"

For the purposes of this study, theopoetic is considered to be a crafting of words which results in the shaping (poiein) of an experience of the divine (theo) (Wilder, 2001). Vocational formation is that which relates to the qualities of the ministry and minister rather than to practice-based, assessable tasks.

In order that the stories of those in practice can inform this consideration, I am proposing a practical research project which will ask the question **'Who do you say that you are?'** of a group of Readers in practice in my own diocese. This material will form a small-scale research project in and of itself, but will inform the wider topic of the thesis as a whole.

Research Overview

Any research that follows from those first papers must, to have any integrity, contain an element of poetic process, either in its content, analysis or reporting;

preferably, though, in all three. I may find that others do not share any of my experiences or desires. However, if my research methodology is congruent with my desire to express myself poetically this element will not be missing from the final work, even if what I express is a realisation that no-one shares my perspective. I can, at least, remain true to the poetry of scripture by expressing my response in words of lament! In the words of cognitive scientist, Raymond W. Gibbs Jr.:

My plea is for a greater recognition of the poet in each one of us—to recognize that figuration is not an escape from reality but constitutes the way we ordinarily understand ourselves and the world in which we live (Gibbs, 1994: 454)

It is my desire that this research will offer an expression of what many consider to be their mundane world of ministry that will lead to an understanding that what they offer in this ordinary way in fact belongs to the “realm of the extraordinary and poetic.” (Walton, 2013)

In order to hear the stories, and to find their interpretation which can be utilized in my own professional practice, I have considered a number of possible research methods. Swinton and Mowatt (2006: 101-132) outline a method of hermeneutic phenomenology. This research falls broadly into their category in that it intends to “listen carefully....., capture something of the essence of the experience..... In a way that would be illuminative and transformative” (102). However, the way they use interviews and the level of researcher interpretation of the data is not, in my opinion, sufficiently robust in ensuring that the voice of those being researched are heard above the voice of the researcher. There is also only scant reference to researcher reflexivity which, as a practicing member of the group being researched, will need to be a significant part of my own research, requiring me to position myself within the research and to be aware of my impact on the story being told throughout the process. (Winter et.al., 1999, Finlay and Gough, 2003; Etherington, 2004). I am therefore proposing a dual methods study which will incorporate a co-operative inquiry project; an expression of action research introduced by Reason and Heron in the late 1970’s and interviews. More detail of the research design is included below.

Participants (or co-researchers).

Our diocesan Bishop feels that it is important that the county encourages 'home-grown' ministries and professionals in medical and educational fields due to some of its significant qualities of size and isolation, particularly in the coastal and rural communities. Acknowledging this, and the fact that the outcomes of my research will impact on the way I teach the formational elements of ministry of word to Reader students who will serve in this specific context, I am planning to work with Readers whose experience is of this diocese rather than a wider cohort. It is my intention to take a proposal to the AGM of my own diocesan Reader body asking for volunteers to be part of a co-operative inquiry group or to be interviewed.

The method of recruitment has been chosen with the intention of reducing power and bias. I know Readers who I would like to interview or have as part of a research group, but I am not willing to exert pressure on them to take part. I would also be selecting those who would be most likely to share my own bias and I need to hear as wide a variety of experiences as possible if the data collected from this part of the research project can be said to be valid or reliable in any sense. The first steps towards validity and reliability will involve self-selected participants. It will also be necessary to continually check the design for beneficence, to ensure at all stages of information gathering that what is being recorded and transcribed is relevant and accurate and that the analysis, even within a creative framework, evidences a sound logic. (Kvale, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1998).

Deciding on the methodology

A number of research methods by which I might gain the insights needed to inform the outcomes of this work have been considered. As the intention is to hear about the experiences of those involved in Reader ministry and from these experiences to find the heart of the vocation of lay people called to a ministry of Word, quantitative methods of inquiry have been ruled out. There is something

in my personality that wants to prove something beyond doubt, but this research is not in the realms of the quantitatively provable.

I therefore need to acknowledge the more creative aspects of my personality and state that what I am looking for in this research are not facts and figures but research findings that will be “like good friends: something that can encourage, advise, stimulate and help us” (Cooper, 2008). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) describe one way of considering the role of a researcher as being that of “bricoleur or quilt-maker”. Whilst this does not satisfy my desire for neatness, it does allow for the possibility that something creative and beautiful might emerge if I allow the the quality of the stories I aim to hear to shine through the processes of research design and analysis.

It is not my intention to record narratives from which I can extract data, but stories from which I can seek to find meaning (Gabriel, 2000 and Boje, 2008).

Gabriel asserts that

Stories are emotionally and symbolically charged narratives. They do not present information or facts about 'events', but they enrich, enhance, and infuse facts with meaning. This is both their strength and their potential weakness. Stories will often compromise accuracy in the interest of poetic effect, itself an expression of deeper fantasies, wishes, and desires. (2000:135)

Using stories as a research instrument therefore involves what intuitively feels like a risk. Gabriel's emphasis on story requires researchers to let go of a reliance on quality data being “objective, reliable, accurate etc.” and to be willing to “engage personally with the emotions and the meanings that reside in the text.” (2000:135). This begs a question about what form the text takes.

At this stage in my deliberations I came to the conclusion that I would undertake a number of in-depth interviews which would be taped and fully transcribed. The transcriptions would be the text. Acknowledging the fact that I am not an outsider to the research topic I would argue that the most authentic interview style would be that advocated by Kvale (1996). Kvale suggests that interviews are conversations (InterViews) between equals rather than questions posed by a powerful researcher to a less powerful research subject. By acknowledging that I am not an outside observer of the Reader body, it would be difficult to argue that I can conduct interviews with Readers without my own bias and

research hopes being influential. As a result, it will be necessary to engage in conversations which acknowledge that, for a specified time at least, we are co-researchers. Theologically reflecting on the transcripts co-operatively, together with the interviewees, finding metaphors and figures of speech that work, accessing experiences in a way “that we have no other linguistic resources to achieve” (Avis, 1999: 100), honing the imagery until it feels that there is nothing more to say by returning as many times as necessary to the transcript and the interviewee utilises Killen and deBeer’s method of theological reflection as an art aiming to get to the heart of a matter. (Killen and deBeer, 2007 Ch. 3)

Together we will be able to explore the heart of the experiences of lay ministry of the word.

This led me to consider a significantly different philosophy of research. Rather than conducting interviews, even in the most collaborative way, it became apparent that some form of action research project would be applicable. The most appropriate method within the scope of action research seems to be that of co-operative inquiry (Heron, 1996). Utilising Heron’s methods will make it possible to conduct (and be part of) research into the lived experience of Readers in their practical environment. Having identified the Reader body as dis-eased, there is something very appealing about a concept of research as human inquiry with the purpose being “not so much the search for truth but to heal” (Reason, 1994:10).

Recent Theological Action Research methodologies were considered. (Cameron et.al, 2010). However, the ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ researcher categories suggested by the team do not sit comfortably with the research to be conducted. In addition, there is a risk to be taken into consideration: in comparing co-operative inquiry with participant action research, Heron (1996:8) says

The initiating researcher in PAR goes out from a privileged setting to co-operate with and help to liberate people in an underprivileged setting, and leaves his or her own privileged setting unchanged. Co-operative inquirers who are exploring the first steps in living in a self-generating culture see their privileged setting as deformed and seek a transformation of it.

Working within the privileged culture of the academic world, I am aware that sometimes my ideas and ideals for Reader ministry are not congruent with the reality of offering ministry in a small isolated rural parish. What I teach and my expectations of my students may seem to be the offerings of the privileged to those who are financially, numerically and time poor. I desire transformation of that privileged culture so that what I teach reflects the best of the practice of those in these communities rather than risking an unbreachable gap between theory and practice. I do not desire to liberate the underprivileged, but to transform the teaching, assessment and praxis of Reader ministry.

On that basis, my decision is to work with a co-operative inquiry model after Heron (1996).

This form of co-operative inquiry sounds as though it could have been devised with a DProf programme in mind. Heron writes about the “primacy of the practical” and elaborates by saying

“Practical knowledge, knowing how, is the consummation the fulfilment, of the knowledge quest. It is grounded on and empowered by all the prior forms of knowing, and is immediately supported by propositional knowing, which it celebrates and affirms at a higher level in its own relatively autonomous way. To say that practice consummates the prior forms of knowing on which it is grounded, is to say that it takes the knowledge quest beyond justification, beyond the concern for validity and truth-values, into the celebration of being-values, by showing them forth. It affirms what is intrinsically worthwhile, human flourishing, by manifesting it in action” (1996:34).

More recently Heron and Reason have stated that they believe one “outcome of good research is ... the creative action of people to address matters that are important to them.” Their statement that this is “not research on people or about people, but research with people” (2001:144) is what leads me to believe that a cooperative research project will allow me to access the richest data. This data will not be my own, but will be constructed by the whole group increasing the credibility of the research by enabling participants to check its “ability to resonate with others who have been through experiences similar to the ones being described” (Swinton and Mowatt, 2006:122) as the project progresses.

Co-operative Research Design

The defining feature of co-operative inquiry according to Heron (1996:36) is that “All the subjects are as fully involved as possible as co-researchers in *all* research decisions - about both content and method - taken in the reflection phases.” (1996:36). This was already my intention, but Heron gives me the tested framework within which to do this as he goes on to identify other factors of co-operative research as:

- “There is intentional interplay between reflection and making sense on the one hand, and experience and action on the other.
- There is explicit attention through appropriate procedures to the validity of the inquiry and its findings.
- There is a radical epistemology for a wide-ranging inquiry method that can be both informative about and transformative of any aspect of the human condition accessible to a transparent body-mind, that is, one that has an open, unbound awareness.
- There are as well as validity procedures a range of special skills suited to such all-purpose experiential inquiry.
- The full range of human sensibilities is available as an instrument of inquiry.” (1996:36)

My criticism of this methodology would be that it seems to be able to incorporate almost any style, any group and any question. This needs to be handled carefully in relation to the validity aspects of Heron’s work in order that it is not simply a group of relatively like-minded people meeting together and affirming their pre-existing opinions. My own counselling training, with the skills of listening, reflecting, challenging and focusing on the heart of a situation will, I believe, provide significant checks and balances in this regard.

Heron’s definition of an internally initiated inquiry is one in which “the initiating researcher are internal to the inquiry focus of the group: they are personally

engaged with the culture or practice which the research is about, and this means they can be full co-subjects” (1996:40). By this definition I will be a co-subject in this research and those taking part will be co-researchers. In Heron's terms this will be a "full form" inquiry, by virtue of the fact that I will be working together with those who take part in the research at both reflection and action stages, involving "same role" participants, in that everyone involved will be a licensed Reader in the same diocese. It will also be an outside inquiry, as the action phases will be conducted outside of the group setting in people's practice. They will then regroup for reflection and to plan further action. The research will involve “open boundaries”, as those involved will be engaging with the world outside of the group during the action stages of the research. (1996:40-44)

On the subject of whether the inquiry is informative or transformative, my desire is intuitively that it might be both. In Heron’s words “An inquiry may aim to be both informative and transformative, one before or after the other. It can be descriptive first in order more effectively to be practical and transformative” (1996:48) or it may be the other way round. My intention is to aim for the group to describe (carefully and paying close attention to detail) their own sense of vocation, how this translates into practice and the skills that they feel are crucial to exercising their ministry. This information will be analysed and themes identified by the whole group enabling a framework of core qualities and conditions for ministry to be created which will inform my own practice in Reader education. I envisage that framework being similar in conceptual terms to the counselling core conditions framework (Rogers, 1951). In this way practice for generations of Readers to come may be transformed.

Heron (1996:45) draws a distinction between Dionysian methods of research and the Apollonian method. Apollo, he says offers “a symbol of the rational, controlled and lucid aspects of Greek culture and Dionysus A symbol of the opposite” (45) Applied to research, and particularly to the co-operative inquiry methodology, those who desire frameworks to be established before the research begins fall into the Apollonian category, whilst those who prefer to allow the frameworks to emerge from the inquiry are Dionysian. As I have a

concept of ministry of word which can be described in theopoetic terms, but no sense at the moment of what I will find in the stories of those who exercise such ministry I am locating myself, at the beginning of this process, in the Dionysian camp. Whilst my desire is to bring some poetic analysis to the data, I am challenged by Heron's words (1996:51) when he says "too much routinization and prior elaboration of method is likely to miss the point and avoid a deep experiential grounding of the inquiry outcomes."

Heron recommends somewhere between five and eight major cycles of reflection and action four of which he illustrates diagrammatically in fig.1. I am asking a lot of my participants. I will make sure this is clear from the outset. I also believe that, through this process of inquiry they will gain new insights and skills as a result of their commitment.

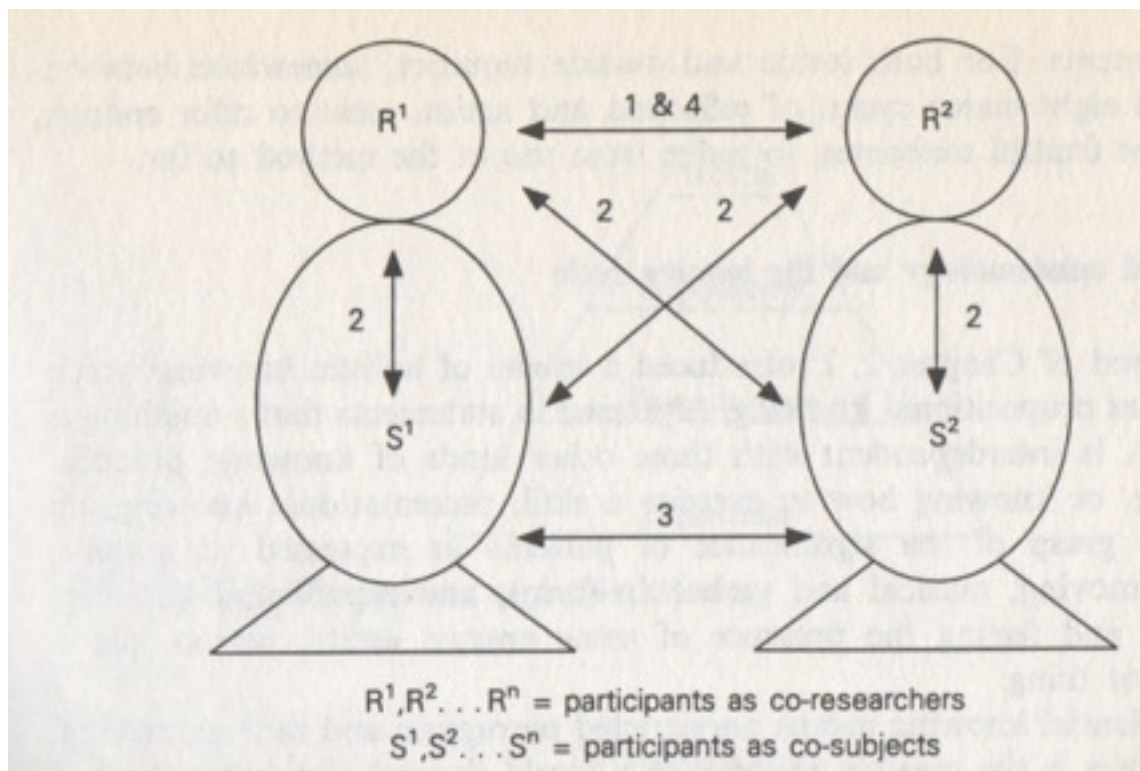


Figure 1 Four stages of full form, inside inquiry. (Heron, 1996: 51) showing internal, personal reflection and interaction between participants who are at once researchers and research subjects.

Heron states that 'Research cycling seeks to convert plausible belief into well-founded knowledge.' (1996:52). It is my belief that there is something in the practices of ministry of the word which enables encounters to transcend the

words and for the encounter to be transformed into an encounter with the Word (an experience of divine encounter). It is also my belief that the core qualities of this experience equate with poetic processes of paying attention and crafting language in such a way as to transcend the words used. This information, I believe, can be accessed in such a way that the conditions for such a ministry can be articulated and awareness of these qualities can be taught. This will not ensure that every encounter, every sermon, every conversation, every pastoral contact achieves such an engagement. It will, though, provide the knowledge base from which to seek to enrich - maybe even transform - some of the more functional aspects of Reader ministry. It will also provide the knowledge base from which to explore more vocational language when speaking of, and selecting people for, Reader ministry. If this is so, my belief will have been converted into well-founded knowledge.

Khan et al argue that participatory action research (PAR) offers the “primary research approach that bridges the gap between knowledge and practice” (2013:158). They argue for an acceptance within the academic world, and amongst those who sponsor research, that qualitative research that involves people’s stories and experiences should, ethically, contain an emancipatory, transformative outcome as well as the acquisition of knowledge. This method is akin to the partial form of co-operative inquiry in which the initiating researchers are not fully involved as co-subjects, being the external initiators of the inquiry (Heron, 1996). Even in this form of co-operative inquiry, though, there is an intention that the researcher’s context will be transformed as an outcome of the research process. This is not the case for Khan et al (2013). They desire to use knowledge to transform practice, but seem to see themselves as the holders of the knowledge and the research subjects as benefiting through the transforming of their practice. This is not sufficient for my research. My practice must be transformed by the knowledge acquired for the purpose of this research to be fulfilled. It is important that the knowledge gained grows out of the stories, reflection and renewed actions of the group and is owned by the whole group. In this way, all will grow in knowledge and all will have the opportunity for transformation of action. I therefore conclude that a form of co-operative research is most congruent with the stated aims of the research.

This methodology is time-consuming on the part of all who participate and it would be to the detriment of this research if the voices of those who feel they have a contribution to make, but do not have sufficient time to give to the action, reflection, action pattern of co-operative research were not included. I have therefore decided to incorporate a mixed model of research in which the choice is offered to potential participants as to whether they prefer to be part of a group process or to be interviewed. If they are to be interviewed the transcripts and my interpretation of what they have offered will be taken back to them as many times as is necessary for them to feel that their own voice is being represented in the final document. Kvale's method of interviewing as conversation (1996) will form the basis for information gathering; again meaning that my own data will form part of the overall material to be analyzed. In this way the interviews will be cooperative in nature and those being interviewed will be co-researchers, even if not in quite the same way as in the group. It will be of critical interest when evaluating the research methodology to compare the quality of data acquired from one-to-one and group research settings.

Ethical considerations:

"Ethical behaviour is about living a life which is virtuous through practicing good traits, including honesty, truthfulness, courage, benevolence, being humble." (Farrimond, 2013:16)

There are a number of ethical issues that need to be addressed when considering this research project. Taking place in a diocese, it has been necessary to seek the approval of the bishop to whom the Readers are licensed and are therefore ultimately in his care. This consent has been given.

Having gained his consent, and dependent on university ethical approval, information will be imparted at the recruitment stage which enables informed consent to be given in writing by all who choose to take part.

It is possible that asking people to consider their ministry from an existential point of view will raise awareness of otherwise unacknowledged questions, concerns or dis-ease. It will be necessary to provide interviewees with contact details of someone who will help them to think through these concerns in a confidential environment which they can see to be unrelated to the research

project in any way. Consideration has been given to the risk versus the benefit of this research. The risks will be communicated, personally and in writing, to the potential participants. Participants will not be coerced in any way. It is my belief, though, that the risk is minimal and that the research project could improve the health of the Reader body as a whole.

Due to the group nature of the study, the small sample size and the interconnections between Readers in everyday life, it will not be possible to guarantee total anonymity. Pseudonyms will, though, allow any dissemination of the data to be anonymous. Participants, and I include myself, will choose the name by which they wish to be known.

There is a need to obtain consent for findings to be offered for publication and participants need to be sufficiently confident that they will not be recognisable in any published work. They will, therefore, have the power to veto anything that they feel undermines their anonymity.

All records will be kept in a lockable filing cabinet and/or a computer with password protection in line with data protection guidelines and will be destroyed immediately after the final examination process of the doctoral programme.

A significant issue for me is that of power. I teach Readers and am perceived as a 'senior' Reader in the diocese. I am also aware of considerable good will from Reader colleagues which could create a desire to please me or get the research 'right' on my behalf. Establishing boundaries and creating a co-researcher relationship from the outset will be essential.

Interpreting the data.

It is my intention that the outcome of the gathering of the data will enable transformation; "transformations of personal being through engagement with the focus and process of the inquiry" and transformation of practical skills "to do with transformative action within the inquiry domain and skills to do with various kinds of participative knowing and collaboration used in the inquiry process". At the same time there will be written reports which will be "informative about the inquiry domain", describing and explaining what has been explored. (Heron, 1996: 37)

The language used to communicate these outcomes and findings will be crucial. As a study into the nature of ministry of word I am acutely aware that the use of words holds a power and responsibility in so many ways.

“The experience of (Erfahrung) of meaning that takes place in understanding always includes application. Now we are to note *that this whole process is verbal*. It is not for nothing that the special problematic of understanding and the attempt to master it as an art - the concern of hermeneutics - belongs traditionally to the sphere of grammar and rhetoric. Language is the medium in which substantive understanding and agreement take place between two people” (Gadamer, 2004:386)

Gadamer goes on to say that “everything we have said characterizing the situation of two people coming to an understanding in conversation has a genuine application to hermeneutics, which is concerned with *understanding texts*” (Gadamer, 2004:387). Elaine Graham speaks of the “living human document” (2009:151). This living human document is what is being shared and recorded and then “gazed upon” (Heron, 1996) in what research refers to as data.

My intention is to find what it is in Readers’ experiences that they perceive as the nature of their calling and vocation. In hearing these stories, I will also be seeking to find out what it is that they perceive as taking their ministry from the practical and functional roles into a sacred ministry of The Word; that divine encounter which may be through preaching or teaching or interceding, but may also be in contacts in the staff room, the post-office, the pub. This is not objective, scientific material and therefore requires careful handling if it is to communicate anything of depth and value. As ministers of word, Readers are dealing with linguistic form and relational properties of language all the time. As a group of researchers we will be immersed in our topic whenever we meet together and, in the action phases of the research, when we are putting into practice the concepts identified in the reflective cycles. Applying poetic principals will again improve the integrity of this research project as part of the overall thesis.

Instead of writing or talking through abstract concepts *about* their research without ever immersing deeply in the culturally-constructed worlds of the people they study, as one might proceed in writing or applying scientific theory, poets write *in* and *with* the facts and frameworks of what they see in themselves *in relation to* Others, in

particular landscapes, emotional and social situations. (Brady, 2009: xiv)

Brady argues for poetry and poetics to be among the tools available to researchers in social science subjects. I would argue that with much of our core religious text, the Bible, written in poetic form, this argument can be extended to the realms of practical theology. In my search for a deeper understanding of what Readers consider to be their vocation, their motivation and their experience of words which transcend the mundane I am hoping to find expression to some almost inexpressible concepts. I need all the tools I can lay my hands on. As Brady says “poetry can catch us in the act of *being*. What could be more fundamental to knowing the human condition than that?” (2009: xvi). The creative, poetic voice allows a third voice to be heard which combines those of the researcher and the researched. Transparency in the process of analysis is essential to ensure that the voices of participants are not represented selectively (Grbich, 2013:130). Acknowledging this potential, however, there are many strengths in this method; not least of these being the way in which poetic inquiry in phenomenological research allows for a time of “dwelling and holding so that meanings can form” accessing to the “embodied interpretation” of stories (Galvin and Todres, 2009:312,313). This process is exposing of both the researcher and participants. It is also demanding creatively, emotionally and in time and energy of the researcher. It seems, though, to be the only process that has the integrity to hold the whole research project together.

Conclusion

A research project which will form a major part of the data from which the thesis attempts to address the research question is the next stage in this doctoral process. As the project being planned involves co-operative research and poetic inquiry methods, it is not possible to begin to anticipate what the outcomes will be. All that I can say is that my time working towards the DProf so far has been transformative of my own conceptual frameworks and my teaching practice. I can only look forward with excitement and a little trepidation to what the stories of those in Reader ministry will contribute to this work.

From the data that we gather together I intend to construct a theopoetic paradigm of ministry of the word as expressed by the experiences of Readers.

Having identified the core qualities necessary for a lay ministry of word that is transcends and transforms the words that are offered, it is intended that a way of incorporating these core qualities into my teaching practice will be devised. At this stage of research I can only hope that this work may contribute more widely to the knowledge about, and practice of, teaching of Readers. My main aim, though, is that my own practice is transformed as a result of the stories that we share.

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Appendix 4: Approval Letter from Diocesan Bishop

Dear Sally,

Bishop [REDACTED] has asked me to let you know that he is very happy for you to conduct the research you outlined to him in your email and that he has no concerns at this stage.

He would be very grateful for sight of the results in due course when the work is completed.

Best wishes,

Sal [REDACTED]

Chaplain to the Bishop of [REDACTED]

Appendix 5: Participant Information Sheet

Section A: The Research Project

When words meet The Word

This project aims to find a way of expressing a theological framework for the ministry of word which will enhance the training of our next generation of Readers. It is intended that information gathered in this project will assist in the production of a framework that considers ways in which we might develop a ministry which engages with words in a way that results in the shaping of an experience of the divine (a theopoetic ministry of word).

The research is being carried out by Sally Buck as part of a Professional Doctorate being studied through the Cambridge Theological Federation and Anglia Ruskin University. This project is also approved by Bishop Christopher and findings will be reported to the diocese as well as forming part of the overall thesis.

You are invited to participate in this research in one of two ways:

Either 1 - As a co-researcher in a co-operative inquiry group (meeting approximately once a month from February 2014 on 6 – 8 occasions). Together we will devise and reflect upon a way of exploring ways in which Readers' ministry is an expression of a ministry of word which shapes experiences of the divine.

At this stage commitment is to the first of these sessions which I will arrange and 'chair'. In this session the concept of co-operative inquiry will be explained. At the end of this session the group will need to submit a research proposal to Anglia Ruskin University setting out the way in which the group intends to collect, analyse and report data.

Or 2 - By being interviewed. This would involve about an hour talking with me about your response to the same question. We would then meet on one or two further occasions to make sure that I have interpreted what I heard you say in the way that you intended it to be heard.

These early results may also be included in published papers relating to the initial findings.

This research is being self-funded and forms part of my role in ministry education and formation.

For further information contact:

Sally Buck

sbuck@lincoln.ac.uk

Section B: Your Participation in the Research Project

1. You have been invited to participate in this study as a Reader in ministry in [REDACTED] Diocese.
2. You are under no obligation to participate and can refuse at this stage, in which case no further contact will be made referring to the project.
3. If you initially agree to participate in the project but later change your mind, you are free to withdraw at any stage. Contact Sally Buck (details above) or Revd Sally Myers [REDACTED] who will be acting as a point of contact for participants in the project if it is felt that contact with Sally Buck is inappropriate for any reason.
4. If you agree to take part in this project you will be invited to choose to participate either in a one-to-one interview with the researcher or to be part of a co-operative inquiry group.
5. It is acknowledged that involvement in such research may involve the telling of stories that have a personal, emotional content. If you should feel the need to debrief after the interviews or co-operative inquiry groups you are invited to contact Sally Myers [REDACTED] who will either offer you time or suggest a further contact person who will be available for this purpose.
6. Agreement to participate in this research should not compromise your legal rights should something go wrong
8. Content of the interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Co-operative inquiry group meetings will be recorded. These recordings and transcriptions will be stored in a locked filing cabinet or in password protected files on a laptop computer. They will not be accessed by anyone other than Sally Buck. Information will be stored for 10 years after completion of the thesis and may be used in further research/publications relating to Reader ministry and practical theology.
9. It is envisaged that participation in this project will have possible benefits to those being interviewed or taking part in co-operative inquiry groups as it will allow discussion and debate about the ministry of the Reader and will contribute to the formation of a theology which will inform those in ministry and in training for ministry.
10. Confidentiality will be maintained by the use of pseudonyms chosen by the participants) in any written or published material that results from the interviews or co-operative inquiry groups.

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS TO KEEP,
TOGETHER WITH A COPY OF YOUR CONSENT FORM

Appendix 6: Theopoetics notes for probable participants

My research question:

1. An exploration of the possibilities offered by a theopoetic paradigm for ministry of the word to the vocational formation of student Readers.

It is also intended to ask the question:

2. How do Readers express their vocational identity and in what ways might these expressions inform the theopoetic paradigm?

Wilder (2001) defines theopoetics in terms of a crafting of words which results in the shaping (poiein) of an experience of the divine (theo).

Michael Leach in a blog to be found at ncronline.org on 25th March 2014 writes:

"Poetry is theology leaping out of the file cabinet and into the heart. It is the Word or words that stir our souls. And, paradoxically, you don't have to put words to paper to be a poet. Jesus never wrote a poem. The only words he ever wrote were on the sand. And the rain washed those away. His life was poetry. He was the Word made flesh. A poet is a poet because, like Jesus, she sees what is really there. Jesus saw goodness in the adulteress, wholeness in the leper, forgiveness in the thief on the cross. He even beheld innocence behind the masks of those who taunted, scourged and crucified him. A poet is a seer who cultivates the Christ-like faculty of looking at what is temporal and discerning what is eternal. As Jesus saw splendor in the lilies of the field, the poet, too, perceives power in everyday places. Poet William Carlos Williams understood that everything depends on 'a red wheel barrow glazed with rain water beside the white chickens.'"

My definition of poetic use of language: language that expresses itself from a place of attention to detail and desiring to express depth, feeling and meaning.

It is my belief that there is something in the practices of ministry of the word which enables encounters to transcend the words and for the encounter to be transformed into an encounter with the Word (an experience of divine encounter). It is also my belief that the core qualities of this experience equate with poetic processes of paying attention and crafting language in such a way as to transcend the words used. This information, I believe, can be accessed in such a way that the conditions for such a ministry can be

articulated and awareness of these qualities can be taught. This will not ensure that every encounter, every sermon, every conversation, every pastoral contact achieves such an engagement. It will, though, provide the knowledge base from which to seek to enrich - maybe even transform - some of the more functional aspects of Reader ministry. It will also provide the knowledge base from which to explore more vocational language when speaking of, and selecting people for, Reader ministry.

Appendix 7: Letter accompanying stage 1 research application



16 January 2014

Dear Zoe,

Please find, along with this letter, attachments of the paperwork relating to my research proposal.

In line with feedback from Paper 3, this paperwork relates to a first stage application. I am applying for permission to begin to interview research participants as soon as approval is given. I am also applying for permission to establish a co-operative inquiry group. Acknowledging the need for those who join the group to be co-researchers, and the inherent risks that this poses to my thesis, the proposal is for a one-off meeting at which the group will establish its research priorities and put forward its own proposal to ARU relating to data collection, storage and analysis.

With best wishes,

Sally

Sally Buck

Appendix 8: Cooperative Research Group Joint Research Proposal

12th April 2014.

A small group met to consider the possibilities of co-operative inquiry.

A number of questions were considered in the formulation of a second stage research proposal relating the work of the group to the DProf research being carried out by Sally Buck.

The four members of the group wish to propose meeting on at least four, possibly up to six, further occasions to consider the question:

How do Readers express their vocational identity and in what ways might these expressions inform a theopoetic paradigm?

The meetings will take the form of reflection with stages of action taking place between meetings (Heron, 1996). It is proposed that the action will involve each group member noting on a day-to-day basis, through careful observations of thoughts and feelings, what it is about our practice of ministry that involves the crafting of words which results in the shaping of an experience of the divine (the definition of theopoetics as offered by Wilder, 2001).

Meetings of the group in the reflection modes of the research will be facilitated by each group member in rotation, thus equalising members' influence on the overall process.

Observations, in whatever form the group members choose to record them, will be brought to each session of reflection. Pertinent content will be shared with the group in conversation which will be allowed to be free-ranging to enable a deepening and clarification of material. This will also allow us to consider the elements of ministry that each member of the group has chosen to share.

Analysis of the data will be thematic and will take place as the meetings progress. Large sheets of paper and coloured pens will provide group members with the means by which significant themes can be identified, recorded and developed. Themes will be colour-coded and will provide the material for subsequent stages of action (allowing particular topics to become the focus of the day-to-day attention and journaling).

It is also proposed that the sessions are recorded to enable nuances of the conversation to be clarified after each meeting. Only members of the group will have access to these audio files, which will be stored securely on Sally Buck's computer.

All written data will be anonymised (pseudonyms have been chosen by each member of the group) and either retained by the group member or stored securely in a lockable filing cabinet.

It is not intended to involve anyone else in this research process and so there are no additional ethical issues to consider at this stage.

A significant conversation about confidentiality led to the agreement that no information about another member of the group will be shared outside of the meeting room. All members of the group have considerable experience in public ministry and can be assumed to remain faithful to this commitment.

At the end of the action/reflection stages of this process a final session will be arranged for members of the group to compile a report. This report has been requested by our diocesan bishop and will therefore inform policy and training locally. The content of the report will be used, either in full or in part (with a full text included as an appendix) in the reporting stages of Sally Buck's thesis.

This proposal has been composed by Sally Buck on behalf of, and endorsed by, all members of the group (a.k.a. Amber, Lydia, Mary and Anna). Copies of responses to an email containing this proposal are included below as confirmation that this is a group proposal resulting from a 2 hour meeting on the morning of 12.4.14.

Heron, J., 1996. *Co-operative Inquiry: Research into the Human Condition*. London: Sage.

Wilder, A., 2001. *Theopoetic: Theology and the Religious Imagination*. Taos Institute Publishing

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):		Sally Buck				
Department:						
Faculty:		Arts, Law and Social Sciences				
Anglia Ruskin email address:		sab253@student.anglia.ac.uk				
Status:						
Undergraduate		T a u g h t Postgraduate		Postgraduate Research	*	Staff
If this is a student project:						
SID:		1125548/1				
Course title:		DProf Practical Theology				
Supervisor/tutor name		Revd Dr Canon Ian McIntosh				

Project details:	
Project title (<i>not</i> module title):	Who do you say that you are? An exploration of vocational and theopoetic expressions of ministry of word as experienced by Readers.
Data collection start date: (<i>n o t e m u s t b e prospective</i>)	February 2014
Expected project completion date:	August 2014

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.	Yes
All researchers involved have completed relevant training in research ethics, and consulted the Guidelines for Applying for Ethical Approval at Anglia Ruskin University.	Yes
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.	Yes
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 .	Yes
Project summary (maximum 500 words): <i>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.</i>	

This project forms part of the overall thesis which aims to:

- **Explore the possibilities offered by a theopoetic paradigm for ministry of the word to the vocational formation of student Readers.**

It is intended to gain information that will inform the overall question by asking a small sample of Readers in ministry in the researcher's own diocese to engage in conversation in interviews or as part of a co-operative inquiry group to explore the question:

- **How do Readers express their vocational identity and in what ways might these expressions inform the theopoetic paradigm?**

Participants will be randomly recruited from those attending general meetings of the Reader body (AGM/training days/area meetings) and will be asked to volunteer to either be interviewed or to take part in a co-operative inquiry group. At each of these events an information sheet will be available and people will not be asked to commit to anything at the time. I will ask volunteers to email me when they have considered the information.

Permission has already been gained from the Diocesan Bishop for this research to take place with people for whom he is responsible. A copy of the email confirming this is attached. The way in which findings are reported at a diocesan level needs to ensure anonymity and a differentiated consent form will allow people to have their data included in the thesis but not in the diocesan report if they so wish.

A small sample of Readers (intended to be around 10 to begin with) will be interviewed. Building on techniques utilised in Masters research, I intend the interviews to be in the form of themed conversations around topics relating to how people see their ministry as vocational and ways in which their ministry is about crafting words and shaping experiences of the divine. Interviews will be fully transcribed and poetically/thematically analysed. The analysis will then be taken back to the participants for verification and further exploration if necessary.

It is also intended to establish a co-operative inquiry group to engage with the same questions in a way that allows for a number of cycles of reflection and action with the intention of enriching the data collected.

At this stage I am proposing to establish a co-operative inquiry group of six Readers. After its first meeting, the group will submit a detailed research proposal setting out intended methods of data collection, analysis and reporting to the university. In this way the integrity of the co-operative inquiry group method is maintained and the level of validity given to the group and any local reports that grow from the study is strengthened.

All interviews and group sessions will be recorded and the recordings stored in locked files on my home computer. Participant

Section 2: RESEARCH ETHICS CHECKLIST - please answer YES or NO to ALL of the questions below.

WILL YOUR RESEARCH STUDY?		Y E S	N O
1	Involve any external organisation for which separate research ethics clearance is required (e.g. NHS, Social Services, Ministry of Justice)?		No
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)?		No
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		No
4	Involve medical research with humans, including clinical trials?		No
5	Administer drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to human participants?		No
6	Cause (or could cause) pain, physical or psychological harm or negative consequences to human participants?		No
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?		No
8	With respect to human participants or stakeholders, involve any deliberate deception, covert data collection or data collection without informed consent?		No
9	Involve interventions with children under 18 years of age?		No
10	Relate to military sites, personnel, equipment, or the defence industry?		No
11	Risk damage or disturbance to culturally, spiritually or historically significant artefacts or places, or human remains?		No

12	Involve genetic modification, or use of genetically modified organisms?		No
13	Contain elements you (or members of your team) are not trained to conduct?		No
14	Potentially reveal incidental findings related to human participant health status?		No
15	Present a risk of compromising the anonymity or confidentiality of personal, sensitive or confidential information provided by human participants and/or organisations?		No
16	Involve colleagues, students, employees, business contacts or other individuals whose response may be influenced by your power or relationship with them?	Yes	
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)?		No
18	Offer financial or other incentives to human participants?		No
19	Take place outside of the country in which your campus is located, in full or in part?		No
20	Cause a negative impact on the environment (over and above that of normal daily activity)?		No
21	Involve direct and/or indirect contact with human participants?	Yes	
22	Raise any other ethical concerns not covered in this checklist?	Yes	

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) 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

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

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.

16. Power

I am aware of a perceived status given to my professional role in education within the diocese which may lead to a desire to take part in research to please me or to a concern about how information may be used.

The first concern can be dealt with by transparent conversation from the start - e.g. "I do not want to hear your story to prove anything for myself - I want to provide a forum for Readers to tell their own stories. Anything that is said will be valuable in my research. There are no rights and wrongs."

The second can also be dealt with by transparency - acknowledging the possible concerns from the start and spelling out that data will be treated as totally confidential and that there will be no talk about what's said in my office or to diocesan staff.

On both counts, I will be careful not to recruit interviewees or group members in one-to-one conversations but in public meetings. I will be stating that I do not have a minimum number of people to recruit and that there is no pressure on anyone to take part.

As the convenor, rather than the leader, of the co-operative research group, I should very quickly lose the identity that would risk eschewing the data. By offering people the opportunity to be part of this research either as a group member or as an interviewee, those who have opted for group membership are expressing a desire to commit to ongoing research, the direction of which they have significant control over. This, in itself, should minimise my influence. It is up to me to use all of my skills learned in non-directive counselling/psychology settings to allow the group to do its work and for me to analyse the process as well as the content.

21 Direct/indirect contact with human participants always raises ethical issues for consideration.

Participants will be given the opportunity to give informed consent based on the information given to them prior to volunteering to take part as well as stated information on the consent form. No pressure will be applied to anyone who has expressed an interest in taking part if, at the consent stage, they change their opinion.

All participants will have the option to withdraw at any stage of the project.

A confidentiality agreement will be included in the consent process. Only information relating to safeguarding issues will be considered to be outside of this agreement. All participants will be made aware of this before signing a consent form.

All participants will be anonymised (choosing their own pseudonym) and interpretations of all data will be taken to a second interview for verification, amendment or enriching before any data is made public.

A priest colleague of mine (who is in no way involved with this research) will be available for anyone who feels disturbed by any of the research process to talk to at any stage. If this person is not appropriate an alternative will be suggested.

22 Other - This project is of interest to the diocese and I have been asked to report to the bishop on completion. There may be concerns on the part of some participants about this local level of reporting.

All interviewees will have the option to have their information withheld from the diocesan report. The co-operative research group will have the freedom to decide whether (and if so how) to report to the bishop on completion.

Care will be taken to ensure that not only are people anonymised but that no place names are used in the analysis of the data.

2 boxes on the consent form will ask participants to give consent to data being used in my thesis (and subsequent research and publications) or in the diocesan report or both.

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

Appendix 10: Cover image from Seeking the Risen Christa (Slee, 2011)

Emmaus by Emmanueal Garibay at <https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwjtgfwgbXQAhXFPxoKHQ9MBf0QjB0IBg&url=https%3A%2F%2Fshadesofsky.wordpress.com%2F2014%2F01%2F05%2Fbook-review-seeking-the-risen-christa%2F&psig=AFQjCNFlyCrJoNY9B9HSfLHT80q9nbpQmg&ust=1479651598451157>
[accessed 19.11.2016]

