

Pastoral support for licensed lay ministers (readers) in the Church of England

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PREFACE

I should like to acknowledge the help of the Wardens of Readers and the Diocesan Directors of Ordinands from a number of Church of England Dioceses who filled in my questionnaires, the Readers at the Central Readers Council Residential Conference held in Milton Keynes in 2014 who spoke with me informally and answered my questions.

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ABSTRACT

Church of England Readers are lay people from all walks of life who are called by God, theologically trained and licensed by the church to minister and perform certain roles in the local churches or to be chaplains within cathedrals, institutions, the NHS and many more places.

Why after three years of training and many years of experience in Reader (Licensed Lay Minister) ministry have I finally not been accepted for Ordination training?

This is a question which has been posed to me on many occasions in my role as Continuing Ministerial Development Officer for Readers and Recognised Lay Ministers in the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham.

Often Readers perceive that their ministry is a foothold towards ordination and they feel very dejected when they realise that this is not the case. One question I sought to answer was 'Who, if anyone, provided pastoral support to the Readers who were unsuccessful at Bishop's Advisory Panels and what adequate, sensitive support might be offered within the Church of England Dioceses?

I sought the answers from the Wardens of Readers and Diocesan Directors of Ordinands in the forty two dioceses to ascertain a wider selection of answers. This process was not easy as there were changes of staff in some dioceses and I did not have the up to date staffing information Therefore fewer dioceses than expected answered the questionnaires. A number of Readers from different dioceses were pleased to talk through their good and bad experiences with me.

I have sought to answer the following question. "How might Readers receive adequate support after being unsuccessful at a Bishops Advisory Panel and who might be the best person to offer this support?

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN THE STUDY

C of E	The national Church of England, established in 1534 by Henry VIII's rejection of papal authority. The Church of England retains a liturgy and episcopal structure adapted from those of the Roman Catholic Church.
Diocese	A diocese, from the Greek term διοίκησις, meaning "administration", is the district under the supervision of a bishop. A diocese is divided into parishes (in the Church of England into archdeaconries, deaneries, benefices and parishes).
Bishop	Responsible for a diocese and for the parishes within it
BAP	Bishops' Advisory Panel. Recommends to a bishop whether or not a person is suitable for ordination
Bishop's Licence	Permission granted to clergy and Readers by a diocesan bishop to officiate in his/her diocese
Clergy	Priests and Deacons in the parish churches
Incumbent	The parish Vicar or Rector
Ordinands	Trainees for ordination into the C of E priesthood
DDO	Diocesan Director of Ordinands
PCC	The Parochial Church Council
Canon Law	Ecclesiastical Law governing the Church of England including ministers
W of R	Warden of Readers with responsibility for pastoral care and administration for Readers
Readers	Licensed Lay Ministers (Some dioceses have retained the title Read
CRC	Central Readers' Council. Deals with all Readers' matters at national level
CMDO	Continuing Ministerial Development Officer, responsible for all post-licencing training for Readers.
Vocations Adviser	Usually a priest or Reader who advises a person on the different forms of ministry and offers support where necessary

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Background

God calls everybody to respond to and to become fully the person He creates them to be. Gooder (2009:11) states that the call to ministry is not only a call to look and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ through words and actions, but also a call to take seriously the real questions about the meaning and purpose of one's own personal and spiritual quest. Each person needs to work out what his or her calling might be, since every vocation is unique (Hickman, 2005: 120). This is particularly true for those whose vocation is towards mission of one kind or another. It is a privilege to hear God's call and the following biblical text can be applied to oneself: "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here I am send me'" (Isaiah 6:8).

It is intended to produce evidence suggesting that many Readers may feel a call to the ministry through ordination after many years of Readership, whilst others may pursue ordination either during their training or soon afterwards. Without Readers, who work on a voluntary basis week after week in their local churches and in allied ministries, the Church of England (C of E) would not function today. Nevertheless, some clergy have been known to regard Readers as second- class ministers: thus the way lies open for them to see themselves in this particular light too.

Readers are lay people in the Church of England from all walks of life who are called by God. They are trained theologically and licensed by the church to preach, teach, to lead worship and to assist in pastoral, evangelical and liturgical work. The Office of Reader is the only lay ministry in the Church of England that is voluntary, nationally accredited, episcopally licenced and governed by Canon Law. There are over ten thousand

Readers, with men and women represented almost equally. A proportion of Readers choose to become candidates for ordination and some of them fail to achieve this. Understandably, those to whom this happens may feel rejected personally.

Pastoral support would seem to be essential for those Readers who are unsuccessful at diocesan and national ordination selection conferences in the Church of England. However, in my role as CMDO (Continuing Ministerial Development Officer) for Readers and from my experience so far, this does not appear to be offered in many cases by those who have a responsibility towards the candidates. In consulting Campbell (1981), Grainger (2010), Larty (2006), Orchard (2001) and Willows and Swinton (2000), I have discovered differing interpretations of Pastoral Care/support, though all agree with the understanding that pastoral care is 'helping individuals in trouble, either church related or in a secular setting'. This will be discussed more fully in the dissertation.

Failure to reach such standards, though required by an authority previously experienced as encouraging and supportive, is not mentioned explicitly in those books about pastoral care that have been consulted (Ramsey, 2004; Collins, 1988; Carr, 1997). In Alistair Campbell's authoritative 'Dictionary of Pastoral Support' (1990), the key word 'rejection' is not mentioned, possibly because this is seen as a negative concept. Yet the Church nationally is the one place where rejection is taken seriously.

On the basis of enquiries (April 2010) with University libraries (Nottingham and Derby), it is apparent that very little literature is available and no research has been undertaken specifically on the subject of pastoral support for rejected Reader ordination candidates, although examples might be drawn from personal conversations with unsuccessful Readers. However, in her Grove booklet, 'When the Church says No', Helen Thorp (2004:27) writes about rejection following ordination conferences and other forms of church service. In Chapter six she suggests appropriate pastoral support for those 'who act as supporters'.

Although Anne Peat's report (2001) for the Bishop of Hereford centred on Pastoral Care generally, it does not ask a question as to whether Readers might be the best people to offer pastoral care as they have a greater understanding of Readers' 'needs'. At present, each diocese sets up its own pattern of pastoral care. The Bishop's

Regulations for Reader Ministry (Archbishop's Council 2001) offer no advice on pastoral care for Readers, only advising on disciplinary measures.

1.2 Problem statement

The evidence of being unsuccessful in an attempt to move into ordained ministry may, perhaps often does, lead to a feeling of discouragement or even rejection. Unsuccessful candidates may ask, "Why after three years of training and many years of experience as a Reader have I finally not been accepted for ordination training?"

In my role as CMDO (Continuing Ministerial Development Officer) for Readers, this question has been posed to me on several occasions. It is a role that brings me into contact with Readers who are seeking advice about ways in which they can use their 'gifts' within the organisation. The question implies the presence of others who are concerned not only with the welfare of Readers, but also with the Church's attitude towards Readership as a function within the organisation. As it stands, the Office of Reader is perceived as carrying with it an option for going forward for ordination, albeit one which may not be realised.

Obviously, if all Readers chose to be ordained, the office of Reader would simply become part of the process of ordination itself. On the other hand, if Readership is intended to constitute a different order from ordained ministry in its own right, then those entering upon it should be aware of the limitations this places on their aspirations towards a different kind of ministry. The ambiguity of the situation may be a cause of disappointment, perhaps even resentment. In a priesthood-orientated ministry, such as that of the Church of England, other forms of ministry can appear to be regarded as relatively pointless, particularly when others have managed to 'leap the gap'. In such a situation there is a need for pastoral support of a sensitive kind but when a group of people has a comparatively low profile, whether in the perception of its members or other people's, the fact that this is so suggests a particular need for understanding and personal regard on the part of the Church.

The overarching central research question of this work therefore is: **How may adequate support be offered to Church of England Readers following rejection for the ordained ministry and what pastoral guidelines may be developed in this regard?**

The questions that naturally arise from this problem are:

What can be ascertained from an empirical investigation regarding the pastoral support of the Church of England Readers?

What does a literature investigation show regarding the pastoral support of the Church of England Readers?

What Biblical perspectives may be found regarding the pastoral support of the Church of England Readers?

What guidelines may be given regarding the pastoral support of the Church of England Readers?

1.3 The Aim

The overarching aim of this dissertation is to research the level and type of pastoral support that are provided to Readers who are rejected for the Anglican ordained ministry and to develop pastoral guidelines that may be utilised by the Church of England in this regard.

1.3.1 Objectives

The objectives of this study must be seen in their relation to the aim:

- To glean from an empirical investigation regarding the pastoral support of the Church of England Readers.
- To consult relevant literature regarding the pastoral support of the Church of England Readers.
- To investigate Biblical perspectives regarding the pastoral support of the Church of England Readers.
- To propose pastoral guidelines which may be followed regarding the pastoral support of the Church of England Readers.

1.4 Central theoretical argument

The central theoretical argument of this research is that adequate pastoral support should be offered to Church of England Readers.

1.5 Methodology

In this study the methodology of Osmer (2008:4) is being followed. According to Osmer's own approach the primary purpose is show how to equip congregational leaders in order to be engaged in practical theological interpretation of episodes, situations, and contexts that confront them in ministry (cf also Smith, 2008:1).

Osmer proposes a model of practical theological interpretation with four tasks:

1. The descriptive-empirical task asks, "What is going on?"
2. The interpretive task asks, "Why is it going on?"
3. The normative task asks, "what ought to be going on?"
4. The pragmatic task asks, "How might we respond?"

Osmer's method offers four tasks for practical theology that can be used to interpret episodes (single incidents), situations (broader pattern events in which episodes occur) and the context (the social and natural systems in which a situation unfolds).

This study will follow the model as it is indicated above.

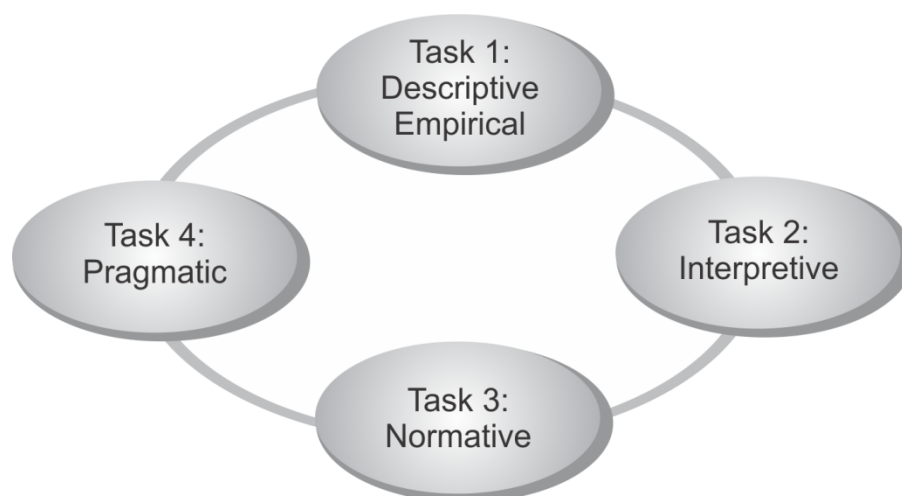


Figure 1. Osmer's (2008:187) Four Tasks of Theological Interpretation

Where interviews and discussions with Readers were done, all the ethical guidelines of the NWU had been followed. Permission was given by the individuals who were approached and informed consent had been granted. Since the enrolment of the study in 2010 – no ethical clearances were needed at that point.

1.6 Division of chapters (as per example)

CHAPTER 1: Introduction, problem statement, aims and methodology

CHAPTER 2: Empirical Study

CHAPTER 3: Literature Review: Analysis of the historical and current theological frameworks

CHAPTER 4: Biblical and theological survey: An analysis of biblical principles

CHAPTER 5: Proposed guidelines which may be followed regarding the pastoral support of the Church of England Readers

CHAPTER 6: Summary, conclusion and recommendations for further research

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER 2

EMPIRICAL STUDY

2.1 Introduction

Method employed in this study

In this study, the research methodology of Osmer (2008) is used. This methodology involves four tasks that form a hermeneutical cycle. These four tasks are the descriptive-empirical task, the interpretive task, the normative task, and the pragmatic task as per the following explanation:

- A. *What is going on?*** (descriptive-empirical task). This requires a careful look at situations and contexts and is an attempt to describe and understand them. .
- B. *Why is this going on?*** (interpretative task). This requires seeking out reasons for what is going on, i.e. interpreting why the present situation exists. .
- C. *What ought to be going on?*** (normative task). This research project will utilise the Bible as the normative standard and basis for assessing, as well as the theological foundation on what is going on and providing Biblical based responses.
- D. *How might we respond?*** (pragmatic task). Interpretation of the situational and normative data to provide a framework for guidelines to be proposed.

This study is done in accordance with the guidelines set by the Research Ethics Committee of the North-West University. All recent documentation will be kept in a fire-proof safe by the author and is available for further inquiries.

The first task set out in Osmer's methodology is the descriptive-empirical task (Osmer, 2008:4).

This task focuses on gathering data through practicing priestly listening in order to derive patterns and dynamics formed in certain contexts (Osmer, 2008:34). In this

study, the participants who will be listened to are some of the Readers in the Church of England who have been approached. The information contained in this Annexure D, Addendum C and D are relevant to explain the situation of the Reader. By using the descriptive-empirical task, the researcher will determine '*what is going on*', from each of the different perspectives.

Method of research

In any empirical research, gathering data (Mouton 2006:53) will always be an imperative and there are three primary methods through which researchers gather data for analysis; quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods research.

Creswell (2012:3) describes qualitative research as “[a] research approach for exploring and understanding and meaning that a person or a group can use to ascribe a problem that is human or social”. This approach can be defined in its focus on the social constructive nature of our reality. It involves the analysis and recording of human behaviour and experience to uncover an understanding of certain phenomena.

The difference between quantitative and qualitative research is primarily in the way that the data is collected. Smith (2008:225) states that quantitative research is concerned with “numbers and percentages,” while qualitative is concerned with the “why and how of human interaction.

Osmer (2008:268) gives the following helpful explanation of the difference between qualitative and quantitative research: Quantitative research gathers and analyses numeric data to explore relationships between variables. Qualitative research seeks to understand the actions and practices in which individuals (and if necessary, groups) engage in everyday life and the meanings they ascribe to their experience. This method has mostly and has been used within the fields of the social sciences, which are usually concerned with describing experiences of people.

Janse van Rensburg (2009:8) writes about the “shift from quantitative to qualitative” methodology in the way it is explained below.

from deductive to inductive; from facts to contexts; from statistics to emotions; from a rational focus to a focus on experience; from explanation to understanding, from objective to subjective and inter-subjective” (Janse van Rensburg 2009:8).

Osmer (2008:628) states that quantitative research helps “in discovering broad statistical patterns and relationships”, whereas qualitative research, “is better suited to studying a small number of individuals, groups, or communities in depth”. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are clearly valid research methods with their strengths and weaknesses, yet the key is finding which method is most appropriate to answer the research question within the specific context that the research is taking place.

For the specific purposes of this study, the qualitative research method was chosen as the most suitable for the specific data the research wants to achieve.

2.1.1 Research design

The aim of this chapter is to devise an appropriate research tool for the purpose of evaluating information from Readers concerning their failure to be accepted for ordination training following a Bishop’s Advisory Panel. Different methods were employed in order to achieve this aim.

In addition:

- To identify and acknowledge whether Reader training and experience are being acknowledged at the interviews.
- To explore how Readers reacted to the experience of being continually observed by the selectors for three days in a semi-artificial situation.

The remainder of this chapter reflects what the researcher experienced in her investigation regarding different aspects concerning Readers in the Church of England. It will become clear as the reporting progresses that there is an array of issues to be addressed within this domain of the Church of England.

Three groups of people were chosen, namely, the Diocesan Directors of Ordinands and the Wardens of Readers from the forty three dioceses. Letters with a questionnaire were sent to the individuals named in each diocese. Eighteen DDO's and 29 Wardens of Readers responded.

Conversations took place with four unsuccessful Readers in my own diocese and 25 from other dioceses (volunteers at a Central Readers Council Conference 2012) who had attended a BAP in the last five years and who were willing to discuss their experiences during informal interviews.

The reason for choosing these three groups was to shed light on what pastoral care was offered within the dioceses and what pastoral care, if any, was received by the individual Readers.

During the Central Readers Council Conference held in 2014 at Milton Keynes it was necessary to identify any Readers who had been unsuccessful at a Bishop's Advisory Panel and who would be prepared to talk about the experience. Twenty-nine Readers from various dioceses volunteered to make comments regarding their Bishop's Advisory Panel's experience. A short questionnaire was given to each Reader to complete.

The questions asked were:

- Bearing in mind that you are already involved in a ministry role, what was your main experience of attending a Bishop's Advisory Panel?
- Did the fact that you were a Reader have any effect on the interview situations?
- How did you find the whole process over the three days?

These conversations have shown Readers to be vulnerable at this time.

An important factor is the need for preparation prior to attending a Diocesan or Bishop's Advisory Panel. Discussions with the DDO, incumbent, other clergy and ordinands, spiritual adviser, would give some insight into the selection process and what might be expected of the candidate. The preparation would also include the possibility of failure and why. This study does not look into the reasons for failure but discussions with a DDO had shown they are varied from, educational standard, personality, unable to

explain their calling, lack of knowledge regarding the Church of England and its liturgy, not the right time with the proviso that they can return in two years' time.

Another factor is the need for a listening ear, for explanations, and possibly for counselling. Accepting ones vulnerability and asking for help is a great challenge for anyone. One emotion which may develop is anger with God, with the church for which they hold a licence, the diocese, or even with the Church of England in general. Readers have been known to change churches in the hope of going again to a Conference or in the hope that they will find their faith again in a different context.

A person's behaviour in crisis is very often different from what it would be normally. If people do not recognise that a person is in crisis, then an assessment is likely to be inaccurate and distorted. The importance of sensitive pastoral support needs to be paramount in this situation. There may be times when a person questions, "What is God's will for me at this time of crisis?"

Watson (1994:9) suggests that:

A consequence of an interventionist view of guidance is that it is very difficult indeed to deal with periods when God does not appear to be saying anything specific to an individual. This becomes particularly acute when the individual concerned wants to know God's will on a specific issue or decision. If the expectation is that God's guidance will always be clear, such an experience can lead to crisis, even questioning whether there is a God at all.

Comments made by Readers during individual interviews.

- "I feel unsupported"
- "People do not understand how I feel"
- "I did not know what to expect"
- "I thought that with all my experience that it might have been a foregone conclusion and that the answer would be 'yes.'"

In turn, these responses indicate that Pastoral support for the husband or wife of a Reader could be important as he or she seeks to help his or her loved one. Herrick (1997: 21) points out that, "In any pastoral relationship where Christian love motivates and the Holy Spirit directs, there is a gift of grace, and the grace is mediated through the listening, speaking and caring love of those within the relationship". From discussions with spouses this appears to be a neglected area as they also may experience neglect, hurt and bitterness towards the Church. Avery (1996:11) confirms: "A painful rejection is experienced when a Reader discovers that the Church does not want their love or to love them."

2.1.2 Selection Conferences

Readers at a National Central Readers Council Conference (2014) who were unsuccessful at a different Bishops' Advisory Panel were requested to answer a questionnaire and express their thoughts regarding their experience and to specify what support, if any, they received afterwards.

The following list includes the general comments of twenty-nine individuals:

1. I questioned why I had been turned down at a National Conference when I had been selected by my diocese, but did not receive an adequate answer to satisfy my needs from anyone. I was very downhearted afterwards.
2. I wondered if my faith and calling were not strong enough even though I had been a Reader for years. I had spoken to various people both within and outside the church all of whom encourage me in my calling. Afterwards I could have done with more support from the diocese.
3. How can others who do not know me turn me down? Surely the decision was God's and not mankind's. So many people had encouraged me both verbally and through prayer. Yet I felt that more pastoral care could have been offered.
4. Perhaps my written references were not good enough. (Reports on education, health, spirituality, church life). I was shown them beforehand and they appeared to be good. My diocese thought I should go forward and have my calling examined nationally. I had some initial support afterwards from my DDO.

5. My Vicar, PCC, church family and diocese supported me and they know me well, yet others who do not really know me can reject me. It does not seem a fair way of testing my calling. The one person who helped me afterwards was the Vocations Adviser.
6. Even after two years I am still angry with the decision. You get so far in the diocese and then you are still turned down by people you have never met before. Also I would have liked clearer information on who to contact for support.
7. I should have been better prepared before I went. I did not know what to expect at a National Conference. I blame my diocese and the people concerned for this. On returning home my DDO contacted me and pastoral care was left to my Vicar.
8. I coped with Reader training so why shouldn't I cope with ordination training. It was unfair to say that I wasn't academically suitable. A degree is not going to make me a pastoral priest. I managed to find my own support afterwards.
9. My family supported me and felt that it was unfair to turn me down. They were upset too and so were my church family who offered me some support.
10. One selector was very hard on me and I felt that he didn't like me. This undermined my confidence with the other selectors. I was disappointed with the outcome and didn't feel like talking to anyone about the experience.
11. Where is God in this process – he called me? So why should humans have the right to turn me down. I questioned this with my DDO who was quite supportive.
12. Why did I get two lay selectors and the other group two clergy? Would have made more sense to have one of each per group. I was upset afterwards and spoke to my Warden of Readers who offered me some support.
13. My pastoral selector was a Reader who himself had been rejected and this was reflected in his attitude towards me. He did not offer any support and I was left to find my own.

14. I felt as if I had lost out for if God had called me I should have been selected. This left me feeling angry and I was passed between various people within the diocese for support.
15. The people at church encouraged me, as their Reader, to go forward for selection. Now I feel guilty that I have let them down. I wanted long term support but this I did not receive although I did receive some from the DDO and Warden of Readers directly after I received the letter from the Bishop.
16. I feel a mixture of anger, sadness and disappointment. After three years I am still very upset. It was suggested by my DDO that I return to a Bishops Panel but I could not face the humiliation again.
17. I was told by letter that I had been rejected but did not receive any help or follow-up from anyone afterwards. Fortunately my family were supportive.
18. It took a lot to robe the following Sunday and face the congregation. I felt ashamed. I still feel embarrassed when anyone mentions ordination. The Vocations Adviser and my Spiritual Director were both supportive.
19. The congregation were very sympathetic but where were the advisers from the diocese? I needed their support. I had Reader friends who offered a listening ear.
20. I had to find my own person to talk to and this did not help my distress. The diocese let me down regarding their pastoral care.
21. The selectors did not feel that I would cope with the study when I already had a Diploma in Theology. Does not make sense. My DDO offered some initial support and then I found my own.
22. Not sure what they meant when they said that I was too old. I have plenty of years to offer in ministry. My DDO stated that I was on the borderline, age wise, of training.

23. Why are we as Readers treated as second class and therefore not offered the support and pastoral care. I felt very let down by my diocese who suggested that I get on with my Reader ministry.
24. I felt let down by my incumbent, who just said, 'Try again in two years'. I wanted pastoral support and the diocese suggested that he offered this support.
25. I acted as secretary in the group discussion and was told afterwards that it might not have been the right decision. No one else wanted to do it. Someone was expected to fulfil this role. so why not me?
26. I thought that I would have an interview with the Director of Ordinands afterwards but this did not happen. I was given a list of people who might help.
27. My family and friends were supportive afterwards but did not really understand the situation. The Warden of Readers offered minimal support.
28. I am angry that a friend who was not a Reader has been accepted for training. Apart from trying a few things out in church he did not have any experience of ministry. The DDO offered an explanation which did not help.
29. I feel that I am better than some of the clergy we have around today so why were they accepted and not me. My incumbent was willing to listen and offer support.

Lichfield (2011:15) reminds us: "It is essential to be aware that, while all ordained ministers are pastoral carers, not all are counsellors in the contemporary secular sense."

2.2 Management of Rejection of Readers

How the rejection is managed affects relationships within the Reader's family, clergy and church family. Husbands or wives may experience difficulties within their marriage while their spouses go through the emotions of being rejected. Do husbands or wives understand the depth of the emotions being played out? It would seem not, for in many cases failure to access effective pastoral support compounds the problem and possibly leads to depression.

At times, difficulties have been experienced in the working relationships between clergy and Readers. Readers have moved to other parishes or even dioceses as the working relationship breaks down. Therefore, there could possibly be a lack of support from an individual who originally supported them in their application for ordination. Safe boundaries of confidentiality are necessary, within which the Reader can talk openly about his/her feelings: such provision may be beyond the confines of the local church.

Thompson (2009:26) suggests that it is “important to develop the skills of setting boundaries. Some people see asking for help and support as a sign of weakness and therefore something to be avoided. This can make the difference between coping and not coping.” Thompson (2009:41) indicates that, “In dealing with matters of loss and bereavement, it may be very painful to share feelings and reactions.” The person concerned may feel too vulnerable to talk openly and, indeed the Reader may feel reluctant to discuss such sensitive issues, even though such a discussion may be an important part of the process involved in grieving.

The Church is in the midst of the community, as a servant, but it can be the cause of the rejection that the Readers suffer. What is expected to be a safe place could become threatening. Some Readers complain of being isolated and frustrated and even ignored by people who do not know what to say or do to offer support. From discussions with Readers an important point that they have raised is that they can “feel uncared for by those above them in the ecclesiastical hierarchy and unloved by those below them in the church”.

Readers have suggested that it would be helpful to have a senior member of the clergy to debrief with them and to explain where he/she may have failed. Sometimes an explanation of the contents of the Bishop’s letter is required before there can be any acceptance of what the rejection means. Other people in and outside the church are caught up in the rejection. How may those who have encouraged the Readers to go forward for a selection conference be affected as they experience the Reader suffering emotionally? Pastoral ministry is a sharing of self-understanding, and an invitation to the other person to risk that sharing and to show empathy, caring and genuineness. Thompson (2009:151) makes the comment that, “Understanding where the other person is coming from and where they are heading can give us a fuller understanding of

the situation that is acceptable and advantageous to all concerned.” Anyone who has not attended a selection conference or who is not a Reader could be forgiven for not understanding the Reader’s disappointment. Through empathy, a person is trying to get into the world of the other person in order to experience what it must be like emotionally for the Reader at that moment. This situation could present any priest who has not experienced failure at a selection conference with the problem of really understanding what the Reader is feeling. In this regard McIntosh I (1972:97) states: “It is more likely for a minister to be insensitive to a tentative reaching out for help from a fellow minister or other colleague.”

It might be worth asking who initiates the original encounter between the Reader/ and the incumbent/spiritual mentor/vocations adviser, for example, in an attempt to offer pastoral, sensitive support? Genuineness is a real expression of the supporting minister, or whoever, in terms of what they and the Reader are experiencing in a pastoral relationship with one another.

2.3 Strategic Actions

The word ‘vocation’ within the Church is often used not only to refer to ministry in general but also to specific roles in ministry.

Abernethy (2002:94) reminds us, “We need to reclaim the word ‘vocation’ for the whole people of God, to argue that the vocation of the laity is crucial to the mission and ministry of the Church. Their calling as Readers is not subsidiary to that of clergy – it is just as important and equally valid”.

Letters were written and a questionnaire sent to all the Diocesan Directors of Ordinands and the Wardens of Readers in all the Dioceses in England requesting their assistance with my research (see Appendix A).

2.3.1 Extra comments were added by Wardens.

The questionnaire raised some interesting questions which we will consider (offered by two dioceses).

- Lots of things happen which are not known about, thus enabling people to fall through the net.
- In selecting Readers, the Warden has become very aware of a much more 'joined up' thought process about vocation than he has encountered in previous dioceses. In assessing a person's suitability for training the diocese looks at where their vocation might lie rather than say 'yes/no' about a particular ministry. The Warden would want to review their pattern of Reader ministry with them and explore other vocational possibilities; for example, Lay Pastor or a chaplain – as appropriate.
- This research has helped me (Warden) to think through some issues about our procedure in my diocese and hopefully I can move things forward in a positive way.
- Comment from Bishop Robert Paterson (Sodor and Man) and Chair of the Central Readers' Council. "In offering support the Bishop should prioritise meetings with the candidates who have not been recommended for training. The DDO needs to work with the Bishop and his office so that this vital pastoral care is given as soon as possible."

2.3.2 Reader Interviews (Oral)

Most of these responses were from Readers attending either at local or national conferences with whom a conversation was held, in the hope of finding out who supported them following an unsuccessful BAP and the type of support offered. Fairly random questions were asked during conversations to avoid any sense being given to the Reader that the interview was in any way formal. The aim was to ascertain what support the Readers had received and from whom and were they happy with the support offered? Confidentiality was requested by the participants. Again the answers were very varied, making it difficult to formulate a pattern across the dioceses.

Twenty-five Readers took part from different dioceses, all of whom had attended a BAP within the past five years and were unsuccessful.

Answers received:

1. There was no care in place from my church to support me. I felt let down. The diocese felt that after an initial interview with the DDO my local parish should offer support.
2. It took me a long time to come to terms with my weaknesses as I felt that I could not discuss them with the DDO or Warden of Readers.
3. Even though I am a Reader I find it difficult to share my personal thoughts and feelings with my church and my rejection has not helped.
4. Afterwards I was supported by my many friends in the church.
5. I slotted back into my Reader role within my church and did not need too much support though people were there if I needed them.
6. I reflected on my rejection and disappointment with my Spiritual Director, which helped.
7. I am now working with a new incumbent who does not seem to accept all the experience I have as a Reader. He is aware that I have been to a BAP but does not mention this.
8. The diocese did not seem to have any formal system in place to support me. I was passed from one person to another and in the end I found my own support away from church.
9. I was supported by the DDO for a very short time which left me in limbo.
10. After two chats with the DDO I was left in the care of a Vocations Adviser which proved to be very helpful.
10. I did not tell the Warden of Readers about my rejection but she already knew and offered some support, then I had to find my own.
12. I hoped that as a Reader I would have received more support from Reader and clergy colleagues but this did not happen.

13. I had my own support system in place, which helped.
14. I had two very good church friends who helped me and listened when I needed to 'off-load'.
15. As a Reader I was not treated any differently to any other candidate even though I have had many years of ministerial experience, which I found hurtful. Surely previous experience should have been taken into consideration.
16. I went away on a retreat for two days and was able to talk to the nuns who were very supportive and it certainly helped me look at my future ministry as a Reader.
17. I spent about three months trying to find the right sort of help for me. There were some suggestions made, but these did not seem appropriate.
18. I felt fortunate that I had a Warden of Readers who listened and supported me.
19. I really felt that after all the years I had given to Reader ministry I would have had more support from senior staff in the diocese.
20. It was fortunate that I had a caring, supportive Spiritual Director who enabled me to express my disappointment and come to terms with it.
21. It seems to be so easy to say 'Well you can try again in another two years.' This did not help me at the time and I did not return.
22. There did not appear to be any support system in place especially for Readers
23. I have now been rejected twice and each time I have received little support. I don't know if there is a support system within the diocese.
24. My family were very supportive especially my immediate family and I did not need further support.
25. My church suggested that I take on other roles in the church which would enrich my Reader ministry.

2.4 Summary of results

A problem arose with procedure because not all diocesan staff replied to the questionnaire. Some DDO's had changed roles, with others being appointed in their place so it was difficult to know who was in post. Not all Diocesan websites were up to date and the list of DDO's and Wardens of Readers from Church House in London quickly became out of date. Some information regarding DDO's and Wardens of Readers was found within the appointments pages of the Church Times newspaper. Eighteen Directors of Ordinands and twenty-nine Wardens of Readers responded. In some dioceses the follow-up appears to be provided only by the DDO's and their team whereas in others the Warden of Readers plays a greater role. In some cases, the Wardens of Readers were not always informed about candidates going to a BAP.

There are so many variations between the dioceses that responded. It was felt that with regard to candidates these dioceses responded in general terms, rather than in relation to individual, specific Readers. One factor which emerged from the research was that Readers, as a whole, are not treated any differently from other ordination candidates either during the BAP, or with follow-up care, even though they may have had a number of years in lay ministry working alongside clergy.

Limited resources appeared to be another factor that influenced the type of pastoral care being offered as a follow-up, though it should be noted that Readers give their services voluntary.

There does not appear to be any unified system in some dioceses for making available pastoral care guidelines, which would enable the Reader to have a clear understanding of who to contact when needing pastoral support. This left some feeling more rejected and upset and one might question whether the feeling of failure is greater for someone who has been a lay minister for a number of years, fulfilling many ministry roles within the local church and possibly the diocese.

Twenty-five Readers were happy to discuss their post BAP experiences for the purpose of this research. Again the replies were very varied with regard to the follow-up support on offer, with some Readers receiving good diocesan support and others receiving none.

From the dioceses that responded there appears to be some confusion as to the distinctive roles of the DDO, Diocesan staff and Wardens of Readers in relation to the care of Readers who have been unsuccessful at a Bishop's Advisory Panel. As a result of receiving the questionnaire, two dioceses stated that they intend to review their system regarding support offered to Readers.

2.5 Research methodology discussed

2.5.1 Introduction

One problem that presented was how to access the answers to question from Readers outside my home diocese. Access to Reader information from other dioceses is not generally made available. The most appropriate method was to ask questions within interviews at the Central Readers Council conference where there would be Readers present from many dioceses, including the Diocese of Europe. It was decided not to utilise a questionnaire in this aspect of the research as there was little time to complete one at the conference and, once home, the Readers may not return them. Therefore, in this instance the qualitative empirical method of interviews using open-ended questions was preferred.

To aid with understanding the process for selection in the Church of England, included are some details of the interview areas covered during the three days of interviews and the practical tasks in a Bishop's Advisory Panel. (See Annexures C & D) This might help in understanding some of the answers given by the candidates. Prior to the National Conference, candidates will have already undergone a successful selection within their own sponsoring diocese.

2.5.2 Reader Interviews

During the Central Readers Council Conference held in 2014 at Milton Keynes thirty-one Readers from various dioceses volunteered to answer questions regarding their Bishop's Advisory Panel's experience. The meetings were informal and confidentiality was maintained.

The following questions were asked :

Bearing in mind that you are already involved in a ministry role, what was your main experience of attending a Bishop's Advisory Panel?

1. I know that in some dioceses the selection panel mirrors a Bishop's Advisory Panel but I did not find this helpful in preparation. The interviewers appeared austere and followed me everywhere which I found discomforting. Reader ministry was not mentioned so I do not know if it had any effect.
2. I found the Diocesan Panel was alright but I was disheartened after the first day of the Bishop's Advisory Panel. I was very tired as an enormous amount is crammed into a short time. My Reader ministry was briefly mentioned so I presumed was not important.
3. If I feel and believe that God is calling me to the ordained ministry and sees this as the next step for me why does human intervention deem it not so? Obviously I had a calling else I would not have been called to Reader ministry. The three days I found hard and because our backgrounds were so different we did not appear to 'gel' well.
4. I enjoyed the three days and meeting with the other candidates even though I was not selected and being a Reader did not appear to make any difference. I suggested that having trained with ordinands my previous training should count and having a degree should not be a pre-requisite.
5. I was not questioned about my Reader ministry and this did not come up in conversation. I found the three days difficult and the examiners did not put me at ease. The rest of the group were younger and held degrees which appeared to count in their favour. I wondered if having a degree would make a difference to me being a good priest and that there may be many people disqualified from training because they were deemed not clever enough.
6. The pastoral selector said that he was a Reader but I thought that he appeared unfriendly and asked some difficult questions. The pastoral care letter I could cope

with having undertaken a course in pastoral care but I found the discussion difficult as I was not quick enough to add my comments which I am sure went against me.

7. I was asked if I had an understanding of Ministry in the Church of England. Of course I had. I had been attending church since I was a baby. After all I had been a Reader for 10 years. But this did not seem to help. The best part was the drink at the pub where we could all relax and be ourselves and not be watched and listened too.
8. It was suggested that my Reader training would not be up to the standard required for ordination training. This to me was a stupid statement as I trained alongside ordinands undertaking the same course. This rather made me wish I could go home and forget what I felt was my calling. I felt much happier at my diocesan selection where people knew me.
9. I would have liked more support before I went to the Bishop's Advisory Panel as I felt somewhat out of my depth and that being a Reader did not do me any favours. I did not realise how tired I would feel after the experience. I was expected to convince people that I had a calling from God supported by my church.
10. I met with my Diocesan Director of Ordinands for some sessions on what to expect and these were useful. I think that I answered questions from a Reader perspective which was probably the wrong thing to do. The group were supportive of each other and I found the whole three days interesting.
11. I am aware that I needed to attend a Bishop's Advisory Panel but having been encouraged by the Vocations Adviser, Diocesan Director of Ordinands and Warden of Readers and gone through a Diocesan Selection Panel it is very disheartening to be rejected and my Reader ministry ignored.

Did the fact that you were a Reader have any effect on the interview situations?

1. I felt that I had not answered their questions to the best of my ability and that they did not take my Reader ministry into account. The whole process was draining. I

have been a Reader for many years and cover some of the areas regularly in my ministry.

2. Surely having undertaken three years of theological training there would have been some acknowledgment of my past experience as a Reader. So many of the questions overlapped with my Reader ministry. The process with the interviewers was daunting and I was not put at ease.
3. I did not feel well enough prepared for all that I was asked to do. Perhaps it was partly my fault as I thought being a Reader would make the process easier. The pastoral letter I found difficult and the discussion group was not easy. Obviously I was very upset with the outcome
4. The fact that I had 20 years practical experience as a Reader and been Reader tutor did not carry any weight. I was not sure what answers the interviewers might be looking for and I did not communicate as well as I know I could. Meal times were difficult as I wanted to relax and enjoy my meal and not have to make conversation to impress the selectors.
5. I was not asked any questions regarding my Reader ministry and this upset me. I had experience in a number of areas mentioned in the interviews. I felt that the vocational interview went quite well.
6. I am aware that being ordained means being 'set apart' but so much of Reader ministry overlaps with ordained ministry. Some of the questions asked might relate to the ordained ministry but they also relate to Reader ministry for example stamina, relationships, vocation and others. I was very tired after the three days and felt deflated.
7. One of education selectors was a Reader but she did not mention my Reader ministry or what experience I had. I feel that I do not want to repeat the experience.

8. I don't feel that being a Reader made any difference to the situation. I wasn't accepted and told to try again in two years. Which I didn't do as God lead me along another path where my Reader ministry could still be fulfilled.
9. One interviewer was very interested in my Reader ministry and asked a number of questions relating to my experience. Perhaps I gave the impression that I should stay as a Reader.
10. The fact that I was a Reader and held a theology degree did not appear to carry any weight. I do realise that there is more to ordination than having a degree but surely a calling to Reader ministry should not make one feel like a second class minister.

How did you find the whole process over the three days?

1. I am not very good at interviews so did not give of my best and therefore the selectors would not see the real me. If they had asked me how my Reader training might have prepared me for ordination training I might have relaxed more. The whole process appeared artificial and I wondered how they could assess me from the three days.
2. My problem was that I was so nervous and felt inferior to those around me who were younger and with degrees and my personality did not come over very well. There were a number of high flyers in the group and I wondered what they would be like as a sensitive caring priest. I began to question whether priesthood today is more about running a parish than spiritual care.
3. The interviews I found hard as I do not come over very well regarding communicating in a formal interview situation. My communication is good in my church situation. The rest of the time was not too bad. We were a very mixed group with some having good degrees to those with none. .
4. I was very overwhelmed by the whole process and the interviewers did not appear friendly as far as I could tell my being a Reader had no effect either good or bad, The other members of the group were very friendly and supportive. The

discussion group was difficult as the subject was something I knew very little about and I found myself listening rather than contributing.

5. I was not prepared for the pastoral care questions and found these difficult as I was looking for a 'right' answer. I hold a Certificate in Pastoral Care but this did not seem to help with my interviewers even though it did in my Reader ministry. The visit to the pub gave us a chance to get to know each other
6. Having been a Reader for some years I felt that the diocese ought to know me well enough without me having to go through another diocesan panel. I had spent many hours talking to my vicar and Diocesan Director of Ordinands .I questioned how much notice was taken of the references. The whole experience was difficult and exhausting.
7. The discussion groups seemed to be overtaken by a few people, leaving others struggling to get a word in. I could have contributed from my Reader experiences as it was a subject I knew about. Although we all appeared friendly there was an undertone of rivalry noticed.
8. Many years of Reader ministry counted for nothing in this process and I felt cheated. I found the interviews difficult as I was not sure which way to answer the questions. The education selector put me at my ease. Afterwards I was told to have another go in two years as this time was not right. I did not do this and have found fulfilment in the parish as I am now busy extending my ministry.
9. Some of the questions seemed as if the interviewers had not read my personal details. Could I communicate my faith effectively? Of course I could. Did I have an understanding of mission and evangelism? I wondered what they thought I did as a Reader as my ministry was based on that.
10. The discussion group exercise I found hard and being quieter than some of the others in the group found it hard to contribute even though I felt that my Reader ministry gave me some background experience. The written exercises I found easier and wondered if there was any right or wrong answer to the pastoral care letter. I was shattered by the time I arrived home.

2.6 Questionnaires

As a result of the time constraints during the Readers' Conference, it was deemed easier not to conduct written questionnaires as a tool to evaluate the three main questions mentioned above.

2.6.1 Findings of questionnaires evaluated

This chapter aims to look at the findings of the questionnaires of both Diocesan Directors of Ordinands and Wardens of Readers to ascertain the pastoral needs of Readers after being unsuccessful at a Bishop's Advisory Panel which are held at a number of venues during the year.

One question asked was: "Does the Church of England make any provision for those already functioning in a ministerial role as Licensed Lay Ministers (Readers)?"

In chapter 2 an outline was provided of the overlap existing between the many duties fulfilled by Priests, Deacons and Readers in the parish, stating that the functions of both the Deacons and Readers fall under the supervision of the incumbent.

Oral interviews were also conducted with Readers at a Central Readers Council Conference (residential), held at Milton Keynes (2014) to ascertain to what extent they were offered support and by whom. The overall impression gained was that there are many clergy, even today, who see Readers as second-class ministers. The Readers' role is a ministry in its own right and they should be working alongside the clergy. Indeed, in a number of dioceses there are Readers who are in charge of parishes, only calling upon a priest for the sacraments of Baptism, Weddings and Holy Communion. It is worth noting that many Readers who experience a call to serve God already have successful secular professions and feel that they can serve God in both a priestly and a secular way by working as Self-Supporting Ministers. Too precise a measurement has been avoided because of the inherent difficulty in assessing information which escapes qualification.

2.7 Final observations

Looking at the results of my enquiries, there seems no evidence of any attempt on the Church's part to arrive at a uniformity of pastoral intervention in this area. An overview of the material being considered suggests such a conclusion, and the aim of this chapter is to make that point clear.

The supreme model for 'Christian Ministry' is that of a Trinitarian God. In the Church of England, the source and authority for ministry under God is the Bishop, who is also the focus of unity holding all ministries together. Sharing in this are members of the ordained clergy who represent the wider Church and fulfil other responsibilities in a local setting. They act as a local focus of unity, of leadership and of coherence. In view of this, no ministry can be properly described as individual. All who serve bring complementary gifts. They are in partnership and exercised, for example, in the context of parish, work and home.

Directors of Ordinands

During research on the roles of Diocesan Directors of Ordinands (DDO) in offering support initially after an unsuccessful Bishop's Advisory Panel, it was suggested by some DDO's that to put the full weight of care on either the DDO or the incumbent is unrealistic from a work and time point of view. Questionnaires accompanied by a covering letter were sent out to the Diocesan Directors of Ordinands in **forty two** dioceses; these required a Yes/No answer and also an extended written answer (See Chapter four and Annexure A.) **Eighteen** dioceses replied, which is less than half. The questions and evaluations follow. Percentages for the DDOs are worked out on the basis of the **18** who replied.

1. **After attending a conference would the DDO be expected to supply initial follow-up support?**

From the affirmative responses given, **15 (87%)** of the Directors of Ordinands were expected to offer follow-up support initially after an unsuccessful Bishop's Advisory Panel. From the written statements there was some similarity identified. They confirmed that there was initial support and debriefing by the Director of Ordinands, but after this the Reader may be passed onto another person; for example, the Warden of Readers or Vocations Advisers. One Director of Ordinands commented that she knows of Readers who have **not** moved on in their ministry after years of trying to come to terms with their disappointment at being rejected.

2. **Would support be supplied by anyone else in the team?**

From the dioceses that responded, **16 (88%)** stated that there are people in place to offer follow-up support on a short term basis which could be the DDO or another person in the team. The overall majority of the dioceses did not have a formal team of people to offer support. After seeing the DDO initially the unsuccessful Reader could be passed to a Vocations Adviser, Parish priest, diocesan counselling team, Warden of Readers, or any other support mechanism which might be in place. Knowing when to refer a Reader to someone else and when not to do so is a pastoral skill.

3. Would the Reader be expected to find his/her own support?

From the 18 dioceses who replied, **16 (80%)** stated that Readers would **not** need to find their own support system with **20%** stating that their Readers would find their own. The DDO would check that the candidate did have a system in place, which could be someone from the diocese or they may have their own support. There were only 7 written statements to qualify the yes/no answers.

4. Is there a team of people in place to offer support?

There were 13 dioceses (**72%**) who replied with a **no** answer to this question with 5 (**28%**) confirming that they did have a team of people offering pastoral support. Three DDOs replied with a written statement to confirm that there were people who could be called upon but they were not part of an official team. Here I hoped to have more responses from the dioceses in order to gain a true picture, but with so few dioceses responding the data presented can be viewed as misleading.

5. There may be clergy who feel that they do not have the pastoral experience to offer support to their Reader colleagues at this time (especially those Readers who say the church has rejected them and they are experiencing a loss of faith). Would the diocese offer support?

When asked whether the DDO had the pastoral experience to support their Reader colleagues **12 (72%)** replied that they had, with **6** stating that they would seek help from another person within the team or alternative support. Counselling was mentioned as a way forward if needed. One diocese made the comment that resources were limited for offering support.

6. Would the Ministry team (DDOs, Vocations Advisers, others) offer long term support if required?

There was some negativity when asked if the diocesan ministry team (not necessarily a formal team) would supply long term support, with only **8(44%)** of **18** replying that they would. One diocese stated that the Director of Ordinands would see the Reader as long as was needed. In other dioceses, if long term support

was needed then the Reader may be passed back to Vocations adviser or to someone else in the ministry team. In two dioceses diocesan counselling was offered, if required. There was also the suggestion that Readers might find their own support system or turn to family or friends. Relying on a husband or wife, any other family member or friends can put these relationships under considerable pressure. Outlined were **3** dioceses which stated that 'they did not have any non-recommendations as all their candidates were well prepared beforehand'. A positive note from **one** diocese is that they talk through with the Reader the options for their future ministry.

Wardens of Readers

Questionnaires accompanied by a covering letter were sent out to the Wardens of Readers in all the dioceses. An important point is that many Wardens (and in some dioceses sub-Wardens) are ordained ministers. Some may be Bishops, Archdeacons, Area Deans, Parish priests working a 0.5 post with only 20% being Readers, depending on who is appointed within a diocese. To some extent the answers given reflect their positions and perhaps the way they view Reader ministry. With such a wide diversity of priestly roles it might be suggested that there could be those who consider Reader ministry and experience as not relevant at a Bishop's Advisory Panel.

Twenty Nine (**29**) dioceses responded to the yes/no questions with a smaller number offering a comment (see chapter four and annexure B).

1. Would the Warden of Readers be notified of a Reader attending a Bishop's Advisory Panel?

There were very slightly more answers of yes to this question, with **18 (62%)** stating that they would know, which suggested that DDO's did not always communicate with the Wardens regarding Readers who were successful at Diocesan level and consequently going forward to a Bishop's Advisory Panel. Where there are Ministry Development teams in place, there is good communication between the Wardens and those looking after the ordinands. The Warden would be informed at some point. It has been suggested that there are Readers who do not wish for the Warden to be informed and if they do so would prefer to inform him/her themselves. From the written comments I would identify that there is a lack of a formulated policy within many dioceses.

2. Would you consider that Readers who are in licensed ministry may need more support after non-selection for training for the ordained ministry.

An interesting factor here is that **23 (79%)** Wardens replied that Readers would **NOT** need more support than other candidates. The overall response identified is that all candidates (Reader or not) who go to a Bishop's Advisory Panel will feel the rejection and that this will vary from person to person individual to individual.

The answers were weighted by virtue of the fact that those replying were mainly ordained Wardens.

3. Would the Warden be expected to supply the initial follow-up as part of their role?

The answer to this question was that the Wardens would **not** be expected to supply initial follow-up as part of their role, although **6 (20%)** of those replying expressed that it should. If support was needed then the Warden would offer support or refer the Reader to another appropriate person. Where deaneries have sub-wardens, these would be more likely to be asked to offer support because they know the candidates. The Wardens were not expected to offer any initial support to the Reader if it was not diocesan policy, if they did not know who was attending because the DDO had not informed them, if the Readers themselves had not informed him/her.

4. Would Readers be expected to find their own support if needed and would they know who to contact?

The numbers reflect that **21 (72%)** of the Wardens stated that Readers do **not** need to find their own support, although there does not appear to be any formal system in place according to the written statements. One diocese suggested that as Readers are adults they ought to be capable of finding their own support. Other dioceses suggest that there are people to whom the Reader can refer themselves if necessary: for example the DDO's, Vocations Advisers or their own incumbents. In the first instance, the DDO would offer support but then the Reader's own incumbent may be encouraged to offer this support in the first instance.

5. Would the Warden be notified of the outcome of a panel, for example, by the DDO or Vocations Adviser?

Sixteen Wardens **(55%)** replied stating that they would not be notified of the outcome. Many Wardens of Readers are **not** told automatically of the decision either from the Bishop's Advisory Panel or by the DDO. If the Warden is part of a Diocesan Team or Bishop's staff then they should know of any outcome. Thirteen **(44%)** dioceses stated that the Wardens would be informed as a matter of course.

6. Do Readers have the Wardens contact details?

It was ascertained from the yes/no answers that all Readers **(100%)** would have the Wardens' contact details, which is to be expected. All Wardens replied that the Readers would have their contact details so that they could be contacted either by telephone or by e-mail. Wardens' details are in the Diocesan Handbooks, though not all Readers have access to these. There are dioceses where an ordained warden works alongside a Reader warden within archdeaconries so that good communication is fostered.

7. If you were approached by a Reader who was distressed over the panel outcome would you as the Warden of Readers feel that you had the expertise to deal with unsuccessful candidates who might call upon you for pastoral support?

The majority of Wardens **(25)** felt that they had the expertise to deal with non-recommended Readers and that they also had the expertise to deal with any required support. Where the Warden is part of a team then he/she can call upon other team members for support, if required. There are Readers who would choose not to go to the Warden for advice. Bishop Robert Paterson (Diocese of Sodor and Man), Chair of the Central Readers Council, has offered a comment in Chapter 4.

The Readers

Twenty five **(25)** Readers took part in informal interviews commenting on the question: 'What support did the Reader receive and by whom?'

The Readers themselves requested confidentiality from both parties: from me as the interviewer and from the Reader as the interviewee, with the understanding that information would not be imparted to their DDO or Warden. Very mixed emotions emerged and an overall feeling of rejection. Emotions varied from anger with the Church of England to deep disappointment. They felt that the fact that Reader ministry and experience was not taken into account undermined their role and this came over strongly. In effect, the Readers national Church (Church of England) had rejected them. This rejection was felt more deeply as they were already serving in their parish churches as licensed ministers. Often parish ministry was combined with a chaplaincy or teaching role. Many had been Readers for years, carrying out all their ministerial duties within the boundaries of their Licence.

Strongly expressed was the fact that there were no formal systems in place within their own dioceses for support at this time. What support was offered proved to be minimal across the dioceses. Identified was the feeling that their parish churches had supported them as candidates for ordination training and they, the Reader, had 'let them down'.

Some Readers found support from their own people, either within their families or churches. It was expressed overall during the conversations that Readers found it hard to explain to friends, family, and others who are outside the Christian faith what vocation and non-recommendation means. Following an unsuccessful conference a small number of Readers stated that they found Church life and services had become painful and meaningless and they found their prayer life had become difficult.

I realise that the responses provided by the Readers may not be supported by the Diocesan Directors or Ordinands or the Wardens of Readers, which was a good reason for confidentiality.

Responses received during the informal interviews were various. An overriding message expressed by the individuals was of them being confused by what they went

through. This was mainly because they had expected, through their diocese, to be well enough prepared prior to the Bishop's Advisory Panel. An important point to mention is that there was an overwhelming comment by twenty-seven of the thirty-one Readers interviewed to the effect that they felt that their Reader ministry and experience was not acknowledged within the interviews. Many of the Readers stated that they did not enjoy the experience of the three days and most had not returned to a further Bishop's Advisory Panel.

Due to the range of responses received, it is impossible to derive a short list of the key points actually being made, but the overall distress and bewilderment conveyed in their responses is the most important conclusion to be drawn.

Readers: The Bishop's Advisory Panel.

During the Central Readers Council Residential Conference in 2014 thirty-one Readers agreed to share with me their experience after attending a selection panel. The majority of respondents were those who had answered questions as indicated.

Experience of attending a Bishop's Advisory Panel

A main comment made was that the three days proved intensive, leaving the Readers feeling very tired. A few selectors were found to be austere and did not put the candidates at ease. Four Readers were upset that Reader training was not equated as being academically demanding enough, even when they had trained on the same course as ordinands through a local university.

The Effect of being a Reader

The predominant comment was that being a Reader was either not mentioned and/or previous ministry experience was not thought to have been an advantage. A number left the interviews feeling like second-class ministers. It is interesting that those interviewed did not return to a subsequent conference, but have either continued their ministry as Readers or participated in other forms of lay service within their parishes.

The whole process

In most cases the process was found to be daunting especially when most of the candidates were younger and more communicative. All the candidates were prepared to answer questions from the selectors regarding their Reader ministry and experience, but all felt that this ministry was not considered to be relevant. One Reader mentioned the 'high flyers' in her group and wondered if having a good degree would make a person a caring and sensitive priest.

Evaluation

The central question this research seeks to answer is: How may adequate sensitive pastoral support be offered to Church of England Readers following rejection for the ordained ministry and who might best deliver it?

From research undertaken with Diocesan Directors of Ordinands, it appears that:

- A unifying system of Reader support within the dioceses is lacking.
- The research outcome is affected by eighteen Directors of Ordinands only responding to the questionnaire. Deriving a picture nationally from the responses provided by Wardens of Readers is not feasible; although twenty-nine responded to the yes/no questions, considerably fewer provided written statements in response to the other questions.

2.8 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to devise a way of eliciting information from Reader concerning their failure to be accepted for ordination training. One other area was to explore whether Reader ministry made any difference in the selection process. Questionnaires were sent to Diocesan Wardens of Readers and Diocesan Directors of Ordinands. Due to the range of responses received, it is impossible to derive a short list of the key points actually being made, but the overall distress and bewilderment conveyed in their responses is the most important conclusion to be drawn.

A definite conclusion from researching this chapter is that a number of Readers are feeling unsupported and do not know who to go to for help, either due to lack of information or unclear guidelines. There is still the need to ask, 'Who is best placed to offer pastoral support to Readers?' Therefore there seems to be a need for a more formal structure with guidelines on pastoral care for Readers.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW. ANALYSIS OF THE HISTORICAL AND CURRENT THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

3.1 Introduction

The interpretative task

The methodological approach for this research follows Osmer's model (Osmer 2008), which is a practical theology model with four distinct steps, each an answer to a specific question:

- A. *What is going on?* (descriptive-empirical task). This requires a careful look at situations and contexts and an attempt to describe and understand them. .
- B. *Why is this going on? (interpretative task).*** This requires seeking out reasons for what is going on, i.e. interpreting why the present situation exists. .
- C. *What ought to be going on?* (normative task). This research project will utilise the Bible as the normative standard and basis for assessing what is going on and providing Biblical based responses.
- D. *How might we respond?* (pragmatic task). Interpretation of the situational and normative data to provide a framework for guidelines to be proposed.

In this chapter the focus is on the second of the four tasks in Osmer's model, namely, the interpretative task (Osmer 2008: 184), which seeks to answer the question: "Why is this going on?" Through a literature survey (which may use a range of disciplines) the researcher is seeking to analyse and interpret the influences that impact the pastoral role of the Reader in the Church of England.

The interpretive task may be strengthened by looking at research from a number of fields and related disciplines that will enable a broad contextual perspective if needed (cf Elkington 2010:51).

In this chapter different dimensions of the work of the Reader in the Church of England will be discussed.

It is however important to start with the gifts which were given and used by God in the church as is indicated below:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for the work of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

(Ephesians 4: 11-12)

The intention in this research dissertation is to try and identify to what extent the Church of England might make provision for those Readers rejected for ordination training. For this investigation a literary research method will be used. : .

3.2 The Circumstances

The circumstances that led to Church of England Readers needing pastoral support are that some Licensed Readers feel the call to a sacramental ministry and therefore a call to ordination. They are supported in this call by many people within their churches and community; for example, their church ministers, family, friends and perhaps work colleagues.

Thorp (2004:8) states that, "Out of the humanity that God has created he chooses a people for himself, and out of his people he chooses individuals for particular purposes and ministry". True discernment depends on the wisdom of the Spirit and the quality of listening. One is then (a selector, for example) given the ability to see below the surface and to hear what the Lord is saying beyond ordinary human understanding.

At the present time (2017), many Ordinands and Readers train together on university courses, using weekends to learn the practicalities of their differing ministries. In my role as tutor on one of these university courses (which includes 6 dioceses undertaking the same course) it became apparent that there develops a bond between Readers and Ordinands training together.

Underlying issues may be present though they are not evident during training sessions. For example, as stated by one Reader from my own diocese, “If I am attending lectures with Ordinands why can’t I be ordained?” There is always the big question “Why not?”

Anderson (8) (1999:8) suggests that, “There are different ministries even as there are different gifts to the church, but all ministries are forms of Christ’s ministry, even as all gifts of the Spirit come from the Spirit.” Having undertaken three years of theological training and had experience of ministry in parishes, Readers (Licensed Lay Ministers) still have to undergo a selection procedure. They attend a diocesan selection conference, being supported by their incumbents, PCC’s, church members, colleagues, family and friends and work colleagues.

Successful candidates at diocesan level will be forwarded to a National Conference, being sponsored by their diocese. A Reader may be rejected at either of these conferences. Local selection conferences held within the many C of E dioceses vary from initial interviews conducted by the vocations advisers and DDO’s through to local selection conferences. These selection conferences may vary from a full day of panel interviews to a three day conference resembling the ones held nationally.

3.2.1 Duties

Readers undertake many duties alongside their ordained colleagues and they would themselves suggest that they could have the necessary experience, ability and personality to undertake the role and responsibilities of ordained ministry. Therefore, they do not feel the need to attend formal selection conferences either at diocesan or district level. Readers are involved in preaching, teaching, and pastoral care, which are their main duties. They may officiate at funerals (with permission from their Diocesan Bishop). Readers nationally often conduct Morning and Evening Prayer, also assisting in the Service of Holy Communion, Baptism and Marriage preparation in addition to various Chaplaincies.

Other duties include bereavement visiting, Bible study groups, house groups, Emmaus and Alpha groups, outreach projects and children’s ministry. Many offer a ministry to the elderly and assist or lead Church Services. Readers engage in other activities, depending on the church to which they are licensed (Fig1 Chap 2), working closely with

their ordained colleagues as members of the ministry team. Evidence for this will emerge throughout this thesis.

There are parishes within the Church of England (for example in my own diocese) where Readers perform a leadership role. They run a parish, only calling on the services of a priest to perform the sacramental duties: for instance, Eucharistic prayers, weddings, and baptisms. At Morning and Evening Prayer, Readers are expected to use the Collect for Trinity 21 as a form of absolution. Having leadership of a parish and yet having to call in a priest for certain functions causes frustration among many Readers, especially those not selected for ordination training.

3.2.2 *Calling*

Calling to serve in the ministry is common and a good example is found in Matthew 4:

Jesus saw two brothers Simon, who was called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them "Follow me and I will make you fish for people". Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

Matt 4: 18-22)

The ordained ministry is a ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral care, a divine gift enabling the whole Church to exercise its priestly ministry. After discussion with Readers at national conferences it would appear that there is a degree of frustration among those who invest their time in training courses. Some find their gifts and skills are neither recognised nor used by their incumbent or church generally.

The question here might be whether diocesan and national selectors need more specific training and preparation regarding the differences in the two ministries (refer to the chart on page 6). This preparation would need to involve both the Bishop's appointed selectors in the Reader's diocese, and the incumbents in the Reader's parish. Better preparation for the Reader attending a National Selection Conference by DDO's. and incumbents using the vocations guide for Ordained ministry. (Chapter 2) Also preparation with regard to the possible outcome being a failure and how this might be

dealt with and by whom and also training for the selectors regarding Reader training and their subsequent role, might be a positive way forward. In a neighbouring diocese, one Reader who was rejected by the Diocesan Panel some years ago stated that she has still not come to terms with the rejection and this has led her to struggle with her Reader ministry. Having experienced God's calling initially this Reader questioned why God had let her down and should human beings have the right to revoke God's will.

Magdalen (2008:27) writes: "If we are 'in Christ' and open, his longings will begin to impinge on our lives and choices, our sense of direction and purpose. Though perhaps only dimly perceived, they will lead to the small beginnings and the desire to respond; God's call to the Reader is to become who they are truly meant to be."

3.2.3 Ministry Overlap

Some Readers believe that the roles of the clergy and Readers in many areas overlap and are therefore similar, although there are clergy who would disagree with this statement. One could question that, if this is the case, are Readers being selected for ordination on the basis of the Sacraments only? It seems feasible to suggest that if ordination is to a sacramental ministry then one might presume so.

There are other priestly functions, for example, parish leadership and cure of souls which are not specifically Reader duties. Unsuccessful Readers, during one-to-one discussions, have commented that some experience difficulty in working with curates. Incumbents are seen to give more ministerial opportunities to the curates, mostly as part of their training, and therefore Readers feel even more rejected. Worthen (2012:91) states that, "Ministry is not something that is allotted to a few individuals, but rather in its diversity it reflects the abundance and freedom of the Holy Spirit".

Why do Readers need sensitive pastoral support? After being unsuccessful at a Selection Conference, those Readers who are ministers need support because they experience the pain of rejection: anger, grief, loss of faith, confusion, shock, or the feeling of being misunderstood and let down by the Church and by colleagues.

3.3 Sensitive Support

A sense of disappointment may be felt by all rejected ordination candidates. For experienced Readers who have undertaken the duties and responsibilities of a minister for some years, the rejection, hurt and feeling of failure are all the more painful.

Leech (1986:350) suggests that, "Pastoral ministry must include and place a high priority upon the intimate encounter with human beings in their inner strivings for God".

Many Christians, including Readers, find it hard to be honest about their feelings of frustration, rage and disappointment with God. How does one deal with loss of faith in the Church, especially that experienced by of a Reader?

After an unsuccessful BAP a Reader can experience a sense of bereavement, which can lead to disillusionment with the Church of England and lack of confidence in their diocesan structure.

It is at these points that the sensitivity of individual and pastoral support is crucial (Whipp, 2013:47). "Theologically, we are making room emotionally and spiritually, and with the gift of our attention and imagination, for the other person's thoughts and frustrations to enter into our heart and mind" (Whipp, 2013:128).

It could be difficult for a Reader who is experiencing a sense of disappointment and failure to face the congregation. Help is often needed in the journey forward. The Reader needs to know that God is not indifferent to his/her suffering, for he himself experienced in Christ the depth and anguish of it. The whole of Peter's first letter provides an assurance that God sympathises with us in suffering.

Lyall (2001:XV1) argues that "pastoral ministry has its own integrity rooted in the life and worship of the Christian Church, a community of faith which finds its identity in the events surrounding the story of Jesus of Nazareth".

3.3.1 Pastoral support is the father of compassion and the God of all comfort, which for Readers who are questioning their faith might be difficult to comprehend. An instinctive reaction is often to hit out at God, but God never willingly inflicts pain for he uses suffering for a person's good. Part of the value of a healing ministry is that of constantly challenging a person's faith. A vital aspect of James' teaching (chap 5 NIV) focusses on the need for the work of healing to be conducted by the leadership of the church as the representative of the church. This may be true but not always appropriate.

Underwood (1985:25) states that "pastoral care is the communication of the Gospel verbally, dynamically and symbolically in Interpersonal relationships that refer however implicitly to the community of faith" Ministers are representatives of Christ in what they say and how they act.

Grainger (2010:10) makes the point that "the essential aim of pastoral care is to allow those receiving it to find healing for themselves". Pastoral theology is the study of how and why circumstances are. We love because God in Christ first loved us. It is a theological understanding of human nature and the call to grow in maturity in Christ. Carr (1997:107) believes that "Behind all pastoral activity lurk different questions of ethics and politics. The pastor has potentially major theological significance for the church as a whole." Pastoral theology stresses the close interaction between theology and pastoral experience and the way in which experience leads to theological reflection. Pastoral theology properly relates to the interface between theology and Christian Doctrine on the one hand, and pastoral experience and care on the other. Wright (1980:3) states: "In the academic hierarchy, pastoral theology is seen to be the 'practical bit' at the end of other theological studies. Theology in its service to the community in faith is essentially practical. All theological activity arises out of the words, deeds and institutional practice of the Christian story. Practical theology serves the life and work of the Christian community in its witness and service in the world."

Burton-Jones(1992:150) writes

"Sometimes our fear that we might be unable to cope with another person's pain is legitimate. Were we to say something, we might stir up painful feelings in response to which we might be unable to offer comfort. The art

which is essential in helping others go through painful feelings is the ability to empathise. This is the capacity to put oneself in the shoes of the sufferer, and to reflect accurately through our words, the nature and intensity of feelings they are experiencing.”

This statement could apply to anyone who is offering the support and to Readers receiving it who are feeling vulnerable. Carr (1997:3) states that “there is little available writing which gives theological value to the actual beliefs and un-beliefs of ordinary people or to the experience of the minister as he/she struggles to offer Christian interpretations to people’s everyday experiences. Yet pastors are the theologians of living churches”.

God calls individuals to serve him as Readers and priests and to use their gifts in ministry within parishes and communities.

It is evident that many Readers and clergy do not share a collaborative parish ministry, even though there is an overlap in many areas, which is a cause of frustration and disappointment for Readers seeking pastoral support in the Church of England. I would suggest that pastoral care is the responsibility of all Christians. Whether lay or ordained their aim is to walk alongside and proclaim the love of God which supports, comforts and challenges. The members of the church family may feel that those exercising a ministry, for example Readers are emotionally self-sufficient. Often they never get close enough to discover otherwise. There will always be the problem of Readers who are unsuccessful at Bishop’ss Advisory Panels and the need for sensitive support and counselling for some individuals while others will be self-sufficient and able to cope without any support. Literature expresses that God understands and is present in all suffering.

3.4 Chapter summary

In this chapter the focus was on the second of the four tasks in Osmer's model, namely, the interpretative task (Osmer 2008: 184), which seeks to answer the question: "Why is this going on?" This has been fulfilled by doing a **literature survey** within a range of disciplines. The outcomes of this research were analysed and interpreted regarding the influences that impact the pastoral role of the Reader in the Church of England.

CHAPTER 4:

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES FOR PASTORAL SUPPORT IN THE MINISTRY OF READERS

4.1 Introduction

As was indicated earlier, the practical theology model of Osmer will be followed according to the four distinct steps of Osmer (2008) and used as a theoretical framework throughout the study. In this chapter, the third of these tasks will be researched:

- A. *What is going on?* (descriptive-empirical task). This requires a careful look at situations and contexts and an attempt to describe and understand them.
- B. *Why is this going on?* (interpretative task). This requires seeking out reasons for what is going on, i.e. interpreting why the present situation exists.
- C. ***What ought to be going on?*** (normative task). This research project will utilise the Bible as the normative standard and basis for assessing what is going on and providing solutions.
- D. *How might we respond?* (pragmatic task). Interpretation of the situational and normative data to provide guidelines for the pastoral care of Readers in the Church of England.

This chapter continues with the third step in Osmer's model, namely the **normative** task (Osmer 2008:184), which seeks to answer the question, "*What ought to be going on?*". In this chapter the Bible will be utilised as the normative standard and basis for providing appropriate responses. The Bible will form the basis for theological interpretation, ethical reflection and establishing models of good practice. This chapter moves towards a Scriptural perspective. The chapter that follows will then explain the pragmatic task of interpreting the data which had been collected in hermeneutical interactions to the other dimensions of the study.

Osmer (2008:184) defines the normative task of practical theology as involving “prophetic discernment” and continues:

Prophetic discernment is the task of listening to this Word and interpreting it in ways that address particular social conditions, events, and decisions before congregations today. Such discernment is a matter of divine disclosure and theological interpretations in the face of popular or official theologies that may be leading the world toward disaster.

Smith (2010:112) however, critiques the way Osmer’s third task is executed, pointing to the lack of greater emphasis on the Scriptures. He wrote that an approach exegetically inclined would fit well if one is interested in showing its high view of Scriptures, even if one is in the area of practical theology. In another source, however, Osmer (2006:329) indicates “...practical theologians cannot avoid offering this sort of normative guidance to the Christian community, for it is a key part of developing an action-guiding theory of Christian praxis. Such guidance, moreover, is explicitly theological and draws on the sources of Christian truth: Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason.”

The key purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to “listen” to the Bible in such a way that it enables prophetic discernment in the matter of the pastoral care to Readers in the Church of England.

This chapter therefore seeks to address the research question: What is the biblical basis for pastoral support for ministry? By researching the related Biblical perspectives, an attempt will be made to show that the critical and faithful reflection of the scriptures and traditions of the Church can be understood through our knowledge of theology. Pastoral care becomes that branch of theology specifically concerned with the interaction between theology and that part of Christian praxis denoted by the term pastoral care.

This chapter will attempt to understand from a biblical perspective that there are some ministry issues where coherence in ministry and pastoral care is required. The structure of the chapter will seek to indicate the theological basis: what the Gospels say; biblical images and themes; Jesus’ pastoral ministry; and the shepherd imagery.

We may ask if parish ministry is necessarily confined to the priesthood (referring to the ordained ministry) as we are all chosen people, a royal priesthood' (1 Peter 2 v 5). Ordained ministry is essentially a ministry of the Word, sacraments and pastoral care and Readers have a ministry of preaching, teaching and pastoral care. Today, Readers perform many of the duties that hitherto would have been undertaken by clergy alone as some see themselves as having a "vocation" before God.

The term 'vocation' comes from the Latin *Vocatio* – summons; and *Vocare* – to call. Vocation was originally used in the 15th century for a call into the priesthood or religious order. Originally, only those in religious orders had a 'vocation' or 'calling'; everyone else simply had a job in order to make a living. Gradually, the term 'vocation' was broadened to include all people and came to mean the work in which a person was regularly employed.

With regard to this "calling" or "vocation", Dewar (1988:159) states: "The words layperson and laity should be expunged from the Christian vocabulary. This clerical high-jacking of the notion of vocation is thus enshrined in our language which makes it difficult to see in any other way. Small wonder that the full-time sacred ministry is seen as the only outlet for a Christian with a desire for service and self-giving." This call to ordination is perhaps more an expression of hope than fact.

The Church of England, partly because of its territorial coverage, has always prided itself on its pastoral emphasis and its long tradition of the Vicar being the 'father of the flock'. There is no lack of handbooks on pastoral care, or how to do those things which are part of ecclesiastical ministry (Wright, 1980) It could be argued that traditional ways of theological thinking and learning did not and cannot take into account our emotional side and our traditional selves. Campbell (1990:201) suggests that, "Pastoral Theology is a theological study of the churches' action in its own life and toward society, in response to the activity of God". Larty (2006:99) states that, "Pastoral theology is experiential theology - theology through practice and action". Pastoral ministry is experienced at the margins of the Church, where belief coincides with unbelief and half belief. It is both the nature of God as Trinity and the nature of the ministry of Jesus in working with his disciples that provide an understanding of mission and ministry that is mutual, supportive and relational.

“In the past, pastoral care has been seen as the function of the ordained priesthood or minister. There may be some uncertainty about whether ordination gives any special competence in offering pastoral care” (Campbell, 1986:9). It could be suggested that pastoral care begins with the whole Church. There are many Readers and other lay persons in our churches and communities who have a calling to pastoral care and undertake this spiritually with love, support, understanding and loving our neighbours as ourselves. Recognising one’s limitations within the pastoral care context is important in fulfilling this role and the experience of the ordained minister may be more appropriate, for example, in bereavement.

Every Christian has a “life calling from God (vocation) and should pursue their work” as unto the Lord (Kurt 2001:135). “So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31) and again: “Whatever your task put yourselves into it as done for the Lord, not your master” (Col 3:17, 23). Since this research is concerned with Church of England clergy and Readers and specifically the pastoral care of Readers after rejection at Selection Conferences, we might ask more specifically, “How do we hear the call of God either to ordination or Reader ministry?”

God calls us through the circumstances of each of our lives and speaks through the judgement of others: our family, friends, neighbours, church family, ministers and those who know us well. But the final call has to be with ourselves. It is believed that this calling is the one in which a person’s gifts and character can best be developed, so as to be able to minister and offer pastoral care to others. The gifts and the circumstances of our lives have been so arranged by God, that in offering ourselves for the ministry of the Church, we are, in humility and trust, fulfilling his caring, loving call. In every Christian there comes a turning point when we realise that obeying God is more important than anything. God asks of the minister the life of perfect obedience, and this Christ has offered to us. He alone could do so. Our glorious destiny is to grow into the ‘likeness of Christ’, to be ‘like him’. Terry and Francis Walton state (2004): “There is really only one ministry, the ministry of the risen Christ in the midst of the people. He then gives gifts.”

It is by divine grace that the character develops and grows. The person who believes that he has great talents and gifts given by God, will feel that it is right that he should

use these gifts and talents and strive for a position where he can exercise fully God's calling, whether in lay or ordained ministry. We choose our friends in the world outside, and they are people who are congenial to us. It is different in the Church. It is God who calls us and puts us into the fellowship of the Church. We have to learn and to grow in order to love and care for those who share their fellowship with us.

A Church of Scotland Report (2000) states: "Ministers of the Gospel share a common humanity with their neighbours and through Baptism, a common discipleship with their fellow Christians. They are not superior human beings or special Christians but frail and flexible people always dependent on the renewing grace of God."

In more recent years, this concern to ensure that theology finds its expression in pastoral care has had a resurgence of interest in pastoral theology. The trend recently is to train Readers and Ordinands together, usually within a university complex. As a staff tutor on one of these courses, one hears Readers argue that if they are trained alongside ordinands why can they not go forward for ordination?

What does scripture reveal to aid an understanding of the call to ministry and especially pastoral care?

4.2 The Theological Basis

This chapter will attempt to understand what scripture reveals regarding where God is in pastoral care, hence providing a theological basis. To understand this, the focus is on a selection of some pastoral theology literature.

The Bible has a word for us in our ministry and every circumstance of our life. Christ meets our needs and God speaks to us through his word.

Lyll (2001:64) explains that the “theology of Pastoral care is part of a wider discipline called pastoral theology. Therefore, the theology of pastoral care is rooted in the theology of Jesus”. In more recent years, this concern to ensure that theology finds its expression in pastoral care has caused a resurgence of interest in pastoral theology. Burch and Hunter (1990:807) write that in some largely Protestant contexts Pastoral Theology refers to “the pastoral theological discipline concerned with the theory and practice of pastoral care and counselling”.

Coming from another point of departure, Howe (1995:112) suggests that, “Pastoral care is frequently criticised for replacing its theological basis with one from psychology or another human science”. He addresses this criticism by invoking classical Christian theological anthropology, specifically the belief that human beings are created in the image of God.

According to McGrath (2003:146) the writings of Richard Baxter and Jonathon Edwards are “saturated with the beliefs”. He (2003: 616) states, “Theology can be seen as offering models for transformative action, rather than purely theological reflection”.

Scripture is the foundational material of the Christian faith and although different values are assigned to it, there is nevertheless general agreement that scripture and the Church belong together (Carr, 1997:22). Few Christians now operate with the idea that the text alone is sufficient offering for pastoral work. Asquith (2010:3) writes that, “Biblical pastoral care and counselling is based on the primary belief that the Bible is an authority and pastoral resource for interpreting, diagnosing and responding to human problems and crises”. Further, he states (2010:233): ‘The New Testament portrays

Jesus as totally concerned with healing the physical and mental diseases of persons, and commanding his followers to do the same.”

Ballard and Holmes (2005:195) write: “When it has been part of pastoral care, the use of the Bible has varied widely, depending on divergent views of scriptural interpretation or authority and differing approaches to ‘care’ ”. Spiritual, psychological and physical sufferings are part of the human condition. The Gospels call us to reach out to people who experience suffering.

Concerning the tradition, Carr (1997:3) suggests that “Traditional ways of theological thinking and learning did not and cannot take into account our emotional side and our traditional selves”. There is little available writing which gives theological value to the actual beliefs and unbelief’s of ordinary people or to the experience of the minister as he struggles to offer Christian interpretations within the context of people’s everyday experiences. Yet pastors are theologians of living churches. It appears then that there is no single pattern of care in the Bible and there seems to be little evidence of a specialised ministry in pastoral care. Where is God in relation to pastoral care? He is both the beginning and the ending of the journey which God accompanies. An answer may be sought in the Gospels.

4.3 Empowerment of the Gospels

There is a need for pastoral ministry to be supported and empowered by the Gospels. The four Gospels are our only primary source of information about Jesus, but they do not present a biography as such: they are accounts of the life and teaching of Jesus and what he means for the world (Packer *et al.*, 1992:110). About one third of the Gospel accounts describe various healings which were performed by Jesus. The disciples describe many healings performed by its leaders and the members of the early Church.

When we read the Gospels we are struck by the love and compassion which Jesus shows for all people in his ministry: the same ministry that Jesus called his disciples to follow in his day and, subsequently, all lay and ordained ministers to follow and practice today. He understood and recognised human needs and met them where they were.

The Gospels are more than the spoken words of Christ, for they include every action and sign that accompanied the words, for they are both physical and spiritual: spoken words and good works. By doing good deeds, by healing, loving and caring, Christians, especially ministers, are encouraged to communicate the Gospels. Proclaiming the Gospel is then to communicate the entire story of Jesus' pastoral ministry and its implications for people's lives today. Mental and physical sicknesses are issues which run through the pages of the Scriptures. When Jesus came to earth his concern for the sick was so important that almost one-fifth of the Gospels is concerned with healing. The disciples were expected to carry on this healing ministry (Collins, 1998:328).

John's Gospel, particularly, shows us Jesus revealing his need for support from those around him, not least in the Garden of Gethsemane, and from his Father in prayer. Helm & Allen (2002:4) suggest that if Jesus felt the need for support from those around him, we are justified in asking how much more do those exercising ministry roles need within the Church today.

Luke's special interest is in the oppressed and the outcasts of society, especially women and the poor. Spiritual, psychological and physical suffering is part of the human condition. The Gospel calls us to follow Jesus' example and reach out to people who experience suffering in any form. Through the Gospels we read about Jesus supportive fellowship with his disciples, showing a ministry that is not exercised in isolation or

independent of other people. “No-one can have a greater love than lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you” (John 15:13, 14). A sense is gained from what is written in the gospels that Jesus appears to have had an individual and unique relationship with his disciples; he spends time with them in training and giving them unique experiences of healing ministry.

Lyall (2001:95) states that, “Pastoral ministry reflects the essence of the Gospel and should be a response to real human need”. He argues for a theology of pastoral care which is relevant in a society described as ‘Post Modern’.

John (13:34) states, “I give you a new commandment: love one another. You must love one another just as I have loved you. It is by your love for one another that everyone will recognise you as my disciples.”

We cannot read the story of our Lord’s agony in the Garden of Gethsemane without the deepest reverence and awe. The cup of suffering was not just the terrible physical suffering of the cross: Jesus prays that the cup of suffering may be taken from him, but only if it is God’s will. Accepting the will of God is not a mere passive exercise. Reading the Gospels, we are directed to think of God in terms of a deep, caring and healing love, infinite compassion and understanding, mercy and patience. The Bible offers many images and themes supporting the basis for pastoral care.

4.4 Biblical Images and Themes

The main theme is the centrality of pastoral ministry to the gospel. The Bible is not primarily concerned with ideas about God, his saving purpose or his mighty acts. The writers of the scriptures were inspired by God's Holy Spirit to record all that Jesus did and said, and God speaks to us through these inspired pages.

We can perhaps imagine that the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost transformed the apostles, changing them into 'supermen'. God did make them capable of becoming pillars of the Church, but he left them with their weaknesses, their faults, their temptations, their ordinary ways of life, and it is through all this that the power of God is revealed. One of the images that springs to mind is that of the Suffering Servant, in light of Jesus' suffering and death on the cross to save humanity from their sinning. This is not suffering for sufferings' sake but suffering in self-giving love (Osmer, 2008:186).

Since Christ meets all needs, so the Bible has a word for those serving others in ministry, lay or ordained, and for every circumstance of life. Narne (1998:8) reminds us that, "Every image, even the most biblical, has its strengths and limitations. We need, therefore, to work with a variety of images, if we are to gain any understanding of the breadth of God's care".

Lyall (2001:84) quotes Brueggemann as saying that "the 'truth' of the biblical narrative is central for pastoral care". He argues that "those who receive pastoral care should be encouraged to participate in the regular liturgical activity of the pastoral care community".

When Jesus called his disciples to follow Him, it meant that they were to give up all: work, home, family and friends. It was a total demand that could only be made by one who was himself God. He calls everyone to commit their lives to him. It is he who must control and direct all that we are and want to be. He is God (Matt 11: 10,11).

The parables do not present the hearer with an abstract analysis or an illustration of a point of view, which can be considered later at leisure. It evokes emotional involvement and an immediate response. God speaks to us through his word, through hospitality,

care of the hungry and poor and we are encouraged to build up one another, to visit the sick and prisoners and to give alms to the poor. In the challenges and situations of daily life, as ministers, in our dealings with others as we try to help and serve them, we encounter God. In this hard, busy, modern world, Christ is not away from his people: in a symphony, many parts are merged in harmony (Mark 2: 1-12). Here we read the story of Jesus healing the paralytic showing that he undertook physical healing. In the story of the healing of the leper Jesus saw faith and he never seemed to heal without faith, either on the part of the patient or others (NIV).

In Matthew there are many examples of Jesus' healing ministry:

- In Matt 4:12, we read here the story of how Jesus begins his pastoral ministry calling his first disciples.
- Eph 4:7-8, 11-13, where it talks of Jesus giving gifts to his disciples, which would include the gift of pastoral care. "And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Watson,1994:1).
- In 1 Pet (4 & 10), Peter says, "Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received". This verse has been used to argue that love can earn forgiveness of sins, not only for the one who displays it but also for the one who receives it as well. The overarching command to 'love one another', means to take responsibility for one another, to watch over one another in love: a pastoral role.
- In 1 Cor 12 v 4-13, we read of the varieties of gifts we are given for the common good. Verse 11 says, "All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually, just as the Spirit chooses".

God is so much greater than we can imagine, and he sees with complete knowledge and insight what the needs are, and by whom they can be met. The Bible is unique in meeting human needs and its message transcends boundaries, cultures, difficult barriers and varying conditions as it speaks to the human heart. Examples of Jesus' life and caring ministry can be found within it.

4.5 Jesus Christ's Pastoral Ministry

Packer *et al.* (1992:169) write how Jesus taught his disciples that, "God is my Father and your Father. He showed that God cared for them personally, just as a human father cares for his children".

The writer of the Epistles to the Hebrews sets forth the life and ministry of Jesus in terms of priesthood. A priest was one who represented God to humankind and humankind to God. This is what Jesus did supremely. The priest was to bring humankind to God. If he or she is to do this, he must be one with them and he must sympathise, understand and share their feelings.

Christian understanding of God's love has been an interpretation of the New Testament in terms of God's self-giving in the sacrifice of his Son on the one hand and in Jesus' self-giving to God and to mankind on the other. Jesus identified himself with the lives of people around him through his actions and teaching. Jesus taught his disciples to visit and care for the needy in that by serving them they were serving him. Jesus in his humanity needed his divinity and power through his Father to work the miracles, to heal the sick.

Jesus valued individuals and their qualities; he gave people self-respect, courage, a sense of self-worth and of their uniqueness. Jesus was sensitive to the needs of others and he met people where they were and shared their joy and sorrows. He knew the importance of needing others and of letting others minister to him. Generous and self-giving with his time, Jesus had great faith in people, in that they would find the strength to overcome their failures.

In Luke 10 Jesus tells his disciples, "The Kingdom of God has come near to you".

Jesus appointed men, whom he also named Apostles, to be with him and to share his ministry. They were to heal the sick, proclaim the Kingdom of God and perform closely related activities. The Lord sent out not only the twelve, but as Luke records (10:1-2 RSV) another larger group, who went two by two. The job Jesus gave to his further seventy disciples was to gather in a harvest of souls. We are so used to the image of 'The Vicar' or 'The Rector' that we automatically think of parish ministry as a one-person

task, even though many ministries today are collaborative and comprise of clergy, Readers and commissioned lay leaders. Andrew, fisherman and Apostle, is a symbolic figure, representing the Mission of the world.

An example of Jesus's healing ministry is shown in Mark 1: 31 where Jesus came to Simon's mother-in-law: "So he went to her took her by the hand and helped her up. Then the fever left her and she began to wait on him" (NIV).

2 Corinth (3:6): Who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant? Jesus was obedient to his Father's will in perfect love. We do not look for suffering but we know that it must come and when it comes we believe that we can learn from it. We do not rebel, but through Christ face what has to come and determine that some good can come out of the situation. So in sorrow we have cause for joy. Without such an experience we might never have learned to be tender and understanding to others in their trials and grief.

In 1 Thess 5:12-13, Paul tells us to "respect those who labour among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you, esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves".

We may conclude that since all are called to ministry according to their gifts we also affirm that the minister cannot be seen as the sole care-giver, for all have a pastoral responsibility one for the other. All church members have a pastoral ministry of care within and outside the church community. The overarching command to 'love one another', means to take responsibility for one another, to watch over one another in love: a pastoral role.

In line with the command to love, Swinton (2009:104) suggests that "the Bible states very clearly that faith and love are not intellectual entities but are 'ways of loving'".

The writer to the Hebrews has some very striking sentences in which he shows the humanity of Christ and his sharing of our suffering. He speaks of Christ learning obedience, "Son though He was, he learned obedience in the school of suffering".

Hunter cited in Pattison (2000:195) states:

Pastoral care is any form of personal ministry to individuals and to family and community relationships by representative religious persons (ordained or lay) and by their communities of faith, who understand and guide their caring efforts out of a theological perspective rooted in the tradition of faith.

The title 'Pastoral Epistles' is designated to the three Epistles, or letters, that are addressed to 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. Paul begins these letters with a reference to himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus. Though addressed to individuals they are not limited to personal and private communications, since they were addressed to these men to guide them in matters concerning the Church of Jesus Christ and its pastoral care. In 1 Tim: 3-5 we read, "For if someone does not know how to manage his own household how can he take care of God's Church?" These books were ordained by God to aid us in our pastoral responsibilities, organic development and organisation, and shepherd care of the local flock. The overarching command, 'Love one another' means to take responsibility for one another, and to walk over to one another in love, a pastoral role. The term 'Pastoral role' in general is an expression not only of love but also of the particular gifts that have been given by the Holy Spirit, as exemplified below:

- "As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully" (2 Tim: 4-5).
- "If you put these instructions before the brothers and sisters you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus nourished on the words of the faith and on the sound teaching that you have followed" (1Tim: 4-6).

The pastoral letters have always been specifically valued by those called to lead and hold office in the churches. Timothy's letter gives close practical attention to the character needed for Christian ministry and the best way to conduct relationships with different groups of people within the churches.

Titus was deeply concerned with the character of Christian leaders and the practicalities of their ministry. Over the years the role of the Church of England priest has changed, but the shepherding image still remains.

4.6 Shepherd Imagery

Shepherding is crucial for pastoral care and is expressed in scripture, especially in the four gospels.

The image that runs through the centuries is that of priest as shepherd, exercising a pastoral ministry in church and in people's homes; this expresses a great responsibility and authority. Of the many images painted by John in his wonderful Gospel, probably the most descriptive is that of Jesus the Good Shepherd. By calling himself the 'Good Shepherd', Jesus was using imagery that was familiar to his hearers. In John's Gospel (10: 11), Jesus portrays himself as the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep individually, devotes his whole life to them and is willing to die for them. For like a shepherd, Jesus is concerned with the welfare and care of his sheep. Therefore those who have the cure of souls in the parish have a duty to care for their flock, including the ministers assigned to their team. The verses in John show that Jesus had certain qualities that qualify him to be called the Good Shepherd and prove that he is shepherd of the sheep because he came into the world in the right manner.

The image of the shepherd is often seen against a backdrop of rural life. But many people who live in Britain today have neither experienced rural scenes, nor seen a shepherd. The shepherd picture, certainly in the past, gave the clergy the feeling that they must fulfil the role of pastoral carer alone. Fortunately, this image is now changing as pastoral care becomes more collaborative within and between many churches.

The phrase 'pastoral care' is rooted within the Jewish/Christian tradition, deriving from the image of the shepherd and the way he cared for the flock (Carr, 1997:9). This refers to the solicitous concern expressed within a religious community for persons who need help spiritually, mentally or physically. It is probably because so much sophisticated material abounds, so much lack of simplicity, that the image of the Good Shepherd is so especially attractive. Here is the tradition of the countryside, pastoral and peaceful. If we transfer this to our theological understanding, Jesus is the Good Shepherd and we are his sheep.

Both clergy and lay ministers exercise a leadership role within the Church and this can be equated to the Palestinian shepherd who does not follow his sheep: He leads them

and knows each one of them, and they know him and recognise his voice. The shepherd has to be able to find shelter and good food for his flock and fresh water to drink, but more than that he must guard the flock from attack by predators. John 21 (15-17) says, “Feed my lambs, feed my sheep”, which can apply to all people, especially ministers.

Perhaps one of the best known psalms is psalm 23 (Coggan, 1998:66) (BCP) which in the first four verses is divided into three parts: the sheep and the shepherd; the traveller and the Companion; and the guest at the House. This psalm is often read at funerals because the opening line ‘The Lord is my shepherd’ seems to offer pastoral comfort.

One of the most important requirements of the apostolic mission is revealed by Jesus Christ when he uses the shepherd as an example. “I know my sheep, and my sheep know me” (John 10:27 & 28). The shepherd must know his sheep. This suggests that the minister needs to have knowledge of those to whom he/she preaches the Gospel or to whom we offer pastoral care.

“He will feed his flock like a shepherd – he will gather the lamb in his arms – he will carry them in his bosom and gently lead those that are with young” (Isaiah 40: 11 RSV). Characteristics of the shepherd are presented, which Jesus showed to be a quiet voice, comfort, tenderness, skills of leadership and concern (Carson, 2005:644). There is a mixture of tenderness and toughness in the character of the shepherd, who leads, guides, heals, seeks out the lost and brings the scattered flock back together. The image of the shepherd is a powerful metaphor for God’s care for his people and can be useful in pastoral care as an example of the character and nature of a compassionate, just God. The primary role of the shepherd is to know the flock well and to get beside them to comfort and encourage as necessary. This suggests that part of the minister’s job-description should be designated as ‘shepherding’, since this encapsulates his/her primary function within the Church. In Acts: 20:28 Paul, in his farewell address to the elders in the church at Ephesus encourages them to be ‘shepherds of the church of God’.

4.7 Chapter Summary

The conclusion of this chapter is that pastoral care has one fundamental aim: to help people to know and experience the love of God and of humanity, both to be received and to be given. The centrality of pastoral care has to be at the heart of the Gospels. It is necessary to understand the caring activity of Jesus through God, as found in The Bible and especially in the gospels and also to understand the many caring activities which people engage in today. These two activities are both crucial for our understanding of pastoral care.

Biblical imagery can be found within the gospels as examples of Jesus' caring ministry. An example is the biblical context of the command to love God with heart and soul and mind and one's neighbour as oneself: the parable of the Good Samaritan. Like all Jesus' parables this gives a fully human, grounded character to his teaching. Jesus communicates by gesture, word and action so Christian love gives a distinctive character to pastoral care.

It could be claimed that scripture contains eternal truths, but the texts are time conditioned. They were written long before contemporary approaches to and understanding of human behaviour developed. The Bible is significant in all of Christian faith and theology and so plays an important part in pastoral theology. Whatever doctrinal view of scripture is adopted, all acknowledge that the Old Testament and New Testament including the Gospels and Epistles are not only written and assembled by people: they are also about people.

The quality of the tenderness in the shepherd is an image of the tenderness of God and an example for all ministers.

Scripture is the vital resource for the pastor for much of it is concerned with pastoral activity itself and therefore informs the ministers, whether they are ordained or lay. Those who have a cure of souls in the parish have a duty to care for their flock, including care of the ministers assigned to their team. Pastoral care is based on theological foundations, which this chapter attempts to show.

Factors from this chapter to be considered are these:

- The Gospels and the Pastoral Epistles are at the heart of pastoral care.
- Jesus Christ's caring ministry is presented and perceived through the use of biblical imagery and the concept of shepherding is crucial for those who minister.
- Jesus identified himself with the people around him.
- Scripture is the vital resource for a pastor and is important in pastoral theology.
- Pastoral care begins with the whole Church and is not the sole function of the ordained ministry.

CHAPTER 5:

PRAGMATIC TASK

5.1 Introduction

In chapter 4 the normative task was discussed by providing a Scriptural and theological foundation for the important calling of the Reader in the Church of England. This chapter seeks to draw from the situational, interpretative and normative studies presented in the previous chapters and place it in a hermeneutical interaction with each other in order to answer the question “*how might we respond?*”

As explained at the start of each chapter, the methodological approach for this research follows Osmer’s model (Osmer 2008: 184), which is a practical theology model with four distinct steps, each answering a specific question:

- A. *What is going on?* (Descriptive-empirical task). This requires a careful look at situations and contexts and an attempt to describe and understand them (Chapter 2).
- B. *Why is this going on?* (Interpretative task). This requires seeking out reasons for what is going on, i.e. interpreting why the present situation exists (Chapter 3).
- C. *What ought to be going on?* (Normative task). This research project had utilised the Bible as the normative standard and basis for assessing what is going on and providing appropriate responses. The Bible will form the basis for theological interpretation, ethical reflection and establishing models of good practice (Chapter 4).
- D. *How might we respond?* (Pragmatic task). Interpretation of the situational and normative data to provide guidelines (the current chapter of this thesis).

This chapter will focus on the final of the four steps in Osmer's model, namely, the pragmatic task (Osmer 2008:184), which seeks to answer the question: "How might we respond"? It will be shown how the previous research of the different preceding chapters, all flow together in order to show what way this research should be leading to as practical application in the church life, hence presenting not only guidelines but also suggesting a way forward for the issue of Readers in the Church of England and all it entails.

Osmer (2008:393) states that the pragmatic task is one of "servant leadership", as the practical theologian embarks on the process of leading change. Osmer (2008:229) writes: "in humility, leaders consider what the community needs, not just what they do well already or might like to do" and Elkington (2010:12) defines the pragmatic task as simply "forming an action plan".

Although Osmer uses the term "pragmatic", it may also be described as "strategic" including a bigger scope as just the limited "something that works", reaching towards the future and broadening as well as enriching the scope and function of the most important matter of this research about Readers and their role in the Church of England.

A. This chapter will therefore attend to the following matters:

- A short summary of the previous questions asked (according to the model of Osmer as explained above) and proposing a hermeneutical interaction between the results of the aforementioned research in order to get to the pragmatic task (the focus of this chapter).
- Reflexivity and reflection by the researcher herself.
- Proposed guidelines in pastorally dealing with Readers in the Church of England
- Conclusion of chapter

Chapter 2 presents an empirical investigation done by ways qualitative and quantitative methods and found that there is a serious need for Readers of the Church of England to be taken care of pastorally. Many revealing insights were found regarding the *emotional reaction, views, perceptions and positions of Readers* as such which undergirded the

main focus of the study and stressed afresh the dire need of proper attention to this cohort of people involved in the ministry of the Church of England.

Chapter 3 focused on the second question of Osmer and was intended to show why the present situation exists and how it should be interpreted. It is clear that a lot had been written about the Readers in the Church of England and that they also have their own journal, *The Reader* (<http://www.readers.cofe.anglican.org/index.php>).

Chapter 4 had as its aim the normative part of Osmer's model, focussing on the Scriptural and theological dimensions of this specific study on the Readers within the Church of England.

All the results of the above mentioned chapters are now integrated by way of a hermeneutical interaction in order to produce the "pragmatic" part of the study showing "how we ought to react". Integrating into the results of the research, will also be weaved the reflection of the researcher herself in order to formulate guidelines (general and specific) how to deal with the matter which was the ultimate focus of the study in the overarching research question (Chapter 1): *How may adequate support be offered to Church of England Readers following rejection for the ordained ministry and what pastoral guidelines may be developed in this regard?*

5.2 Reflexivity

It is clear that reflexivity in any qualitative research is of growing importance, as Hughes (s.a.: 1) indicates, are the “...the value of retrospective reflection (is) - mulling over, thinking back, evaluating, recapturing experiences...”

In any qualitative research, a final element in the process of research design (called) reflexivity is needed as Osmer (2008:613) describes it, “reflection on the metatheoretical assumptions informing the project, including assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge, human beings, and the moral ends of life”. Reflexivity is often used to refer to mutual influence of the research has on the participants and *vice versa*. According to Chenail (2011:1722) reflection is needed in the whole process of data collection and analysis, due to qualitative research being a “circular, recursive, and reflective process”. Also Kendall (2008:135) stresses that self-disclosure as an important part of the interview process and encourages open and more transparent responses from the interview subjects.

Another aspect regarding reflexivity is addressed by Harwell (2011:149) who indicate that qualitative researchers are deeply involved due to their (own) “experiences, perceptions, and biases”, they therefore should *interact* with the research and are not objective bystanders. In this research it was shown that the researcher is actively involved in many ways in the crucial issue of Readers in the Church of England (see the researcher’s own part on reflexivity below).

The researcher, experienced in the topic the research was done with, also reflected on the study and specifically her role in it and offers it below (verbatim and in italics):

Why did I decide to write this piece of research and what led me to ask the question ‘What pastoral care is available for those Licensed Lay Ministers (Readers) in the Church of England who have been unsuccessful at a Bishops Advisory Panel (Ordination Selection Conference)?

In my role as Continuing Ministerial Development Officer in my diocese and as a Spiritual Director I have been approached by Readers who feel that they have a calling to the ordained ministry. Not all were successful and the questions then asked were

'Why was I turned down with all my Reader experience? Who ought to have been there to support me and answer some of my questions?

As I didn't have any answers to offer I needed to research the question of follow up pastoral care not only in my own diocese but nationally.

Reader ministry is a ministry in its own right and Readers work alongside and in collaboration with the clergy. It is not as perceived by some clergy and congregations as second class and subservient to the incumbents.

Clergy have pastoral support systems in place from the varying strata of clergy, for example, Bishops, Archdeacons, Area deans and other clergy. Although in theory Readers can approach these people it is not so easy in practice to gain the pastoral support as needed.

This dissertation was not easy because of various factors. One main factor was within my personal life and my studies being put on hold for a while.

Other factors were in seeking information and gaining answers from other dioceses, interviews with Readers at Conferences and gaining contact information on personnel, for example, Directors of Ordinands, Vocations advisers and Wardens of Readers.

Although I had access to university, church and local libraries I could not find literature which related specifically to my dissertation.

I was supplied with contact information from Church House in London for Directors of Ordinands and Wardens of Readers. In a number of Dioceses this information was out of date. Personnel had retired or moved to other dioceses and been replaced or email addresses had changed. This made it difficult to access the specific people in a diocese to gain the answers to my questions.

From forty three diocese twenty nine Wardens of Readers and eighteen Directors of Ordinands responded to written questions. An interesting point to note is that rarely is a Warden of Readers an actual Reader as they are mostly clergy of some rank. This led me to ponder neither why Wardens of Readers were nor Readers.

It was easy to interview Readers within my own dioceses as I saw them often at training courses. Some Readers from other dioceses, whom I met at conferences, were reluctant to share their experiences with me.

From this research two dioceses have informed me that they have changed their policies towards their pastoral care of Readers. Personally if this research promotes discussion and changes with regard to the pastoral care of Readers, especially in relation to those unsuccessful at Bishop's Advisory Panels then the study has been worthwhile.

This research was triggered by the researcher's own personal involvement and observance of the positions of Readers in the Church of England and she wishes to make a definite contribution to the matter with this study. It is her wish and prayer that the Church of England should take cognisance of this research and react accordingly.

5.3 General pastoral guidelines

Before any pastoral approach to *any person*, and more specific in this case: Readers in the Church of England will be discussed, it is imperative that one starts with **prayer**. Prayer should start with the person doing the pastoral care and all of those who are involved in the process. The person being guided should also be aware that they are being prayed for by others.

In pastoral guidance the one doing the guidance (whatever position he/she holds) should first analyze the situation and context; take cognizance of the tradition, and after that offer Scripture and prayer and eventually practical advice how to cope.

The first step in this pastoral approach is to **analyze the situation**. The most important part of analyzing the situation is *listening*. The pastoral conversation should not start with judgements or to make observations without fully understanding what the other person means.

The second step is **focusing on the tradition**, where a person needs to rely on his/her instincts, training, insights, and experience. This is applicable to any pastoral guidance but also towards the Reader in the Church of England.

Only after this step can a counsellor decide which part of **God's Word applies to this specific pastoral issue the Reader may be struggling with**. The counsellor cannot offer help with a preconceived idea, formulated prayer, or (already selected) Scripture passages. He/she must first analyze the situation and context; take cognizance of the tradition, and after that offer Scripture and prayer. Therefore, knowing applicable verses and scriptural references is crucial. Scriptures may be used as important and powerful guides for life. It is always advisable to provide certain Scripture verses which may give direction towards the person receiving guidance, especially if they know these. These verses should be applied in context and not as a "plaster" or quick fix.

After the above mentioned movements, it is also crucial to be **very specific** in the counselling given to the person being assisted. It may even be helpful to sit down and write (along with this person) the steps for practical application in dealing with the matter at hand.

Keeping a diary or blog can be helpful in monitoring the progress of the person who came for pastoral help in the first place.

(Adapted guidelines from Smith, 2016: 95)

5.4 Specific guidelines regarding pastoral care for Readers of the Church of England

Pastoral guidelines gleaned from the selection criteria for Readers in the Church of England.

In another document (Chapter 2) it is indicated what the selection criteria are for becoming a Reader in the Church of England. These main criteria can also be the areas where the most pastoral care toward the Reader may be experienced. It will therefore be helpful to mention these areas and prepare ministry for pastoral care on these issues as they may cause the most needed spheres of pastoral care:

A Vocation

All the Readers who were interviewed felt that they had a calling to Reader ministry initially which after time and gaining ministerial experience led to them to test a vocation to the ordained ministry. They also felt that they had to convince the selectors that the calling to ordained ministry was an extension of their Reader ministry. One comment made was that God called me to ordained ministry so what right had man to turn me down. Whilst the Church of England accepts in theory 'that all are called' it appears to find it difficult to work this out in practice.

B Integrity of Faith and Life.

Many Readers live and work in the communities which they serve and exercise a relationship between their faith and their life. Personal prayer and public worship are part of their every day and weekly ministry. Through their preaching they share their witness with their congregations and their actions witness to their love of Christ. In many instances this is shared with their clergy colleagues.

C Theological learning

For a number of years Readers have been trained alongside ordinands undertaking the same course of study with ordinands receiving extra training in the priestly functions. Therefore they comment that they are able to cope with the demands of ordination training. There are Readers who hold Degrees and Diplomas and are well used to the demands of studying. One Reader

commented that she was made to feel ‘that I wouldn’t cope with the study even though I had a Diploma in theology. Following licensing Readers are encouraged to continue with Continuing Ministerial Development and in some dioceses this is compulsory for them to continue holding the Bishop’s licence.

D Reflective skills

Readers are encouraged during training and afterwards to use theological reflection and develop reflective skills. Recognising their strengths and weaknesses can be a difficult skill for Readers who are unsuccessful at a BAP. Many Readers found reflecting on their experiences and seeking answers to questions difficult. Two questions asked were: Where was the pastoral support? Where was God in all this?

E Communication skills

All Readers fulfil a preaching, teaching, pastoral care role and many have years of experience prior to attending a BAP. They lead worship and undertake group work alongside other duties where faith communication skills are essential, A number of Readers found the questioning by the selectors overwhelming and were not sure how to answer or what answers might be required.

F Relationships

Readers work mostly in teams although there are Readers nationally who are incumbents in parishes who only relying on a priestly for consecration of the elements of Holy Communion, Weddings and Baptisms. The Cof E encourages collaborative working practices and there are instances of both good and bad in ministry teams. From my research there is evidence of good relationships with clergy and congregations prior to a BAP and also evidence of the lack of supportive pastoral care following an unsuccessful selection.

G Coping with change

Many Readers work in situations, for example, parishes or chaplaincies where there is constant change as ways are sought to encourage mission and discipleship. Therefore,

they feel that they are able to cope with the challenges which might face them in their future ministry.

H Involvement in the Church of England

Readers are involved in the Church of England and have some knowledge and understanding of the challenges that face the Cof E today. They live and work in the world around them and practice their mission, evangelism and discipleship roles. A general comments made after a BAP was 'of course we are involved and understand the structures of the Cof E.

Strategic actions which may be offered from the dioceses and nationally

- Informed discernment through informal interviews with vocation advisers prior to meeting with the DDO local diocesan selection.
- Better preparation of the Readers by DDO's /vocation advisers (who may be ordained or Readers) prior to attending national selection conferences. What the Reader can expect during the three days.
- Talking through the possibility of an unsuccessful outcome prior to the conference and the reactions which may ensue so that they are better prepared. Local and national guidelines on personnel who would offer support to the Reader.
- Encouraging the Reader after being unsuccessful to continue in their ministry in their local church.
- Educating ministers both lay and ordained, to cope with this situation pastorally.
- Designating people lay or ordained, a network should be formed for the Reader to approached.
- Getting the Reader to understand why he/she has been unsuccessful for ordination training at this time and what preparation could be undertaken with a view to perhaps attending a further conference after two years. The DDO to discuss the Bishop's letter with the Reader.
- Channelling the Reader's disappointment into positive ministry.

- Offering appropriate care to each individual, taking into consideration who might be the best person for this role.
- Looking closely at the vulnerability of the unsuccessful Reader and whether there could be a need for training for those offering care, since this appears to be a neglected area.
- Changes with regard to the pastoral care of Readers, especially in relation to those unsuccessful at Bishop's Advisory Panels will have to be made an imperative.
- At the end, the position of Readers and those who have not been admitted to the full-time ministry should be dealt with at the highest level in the Church of England structure.
- Remembering that prayer is the basis for all strategic actions.

Guidelines

The research has shown that there is a need to formulate a model within the dioceses to offer effective pastoral care to unsuccessful Readers.

1 The Readers

- * Readers to be given up-to-date contact information regarding the Wardens of Readers, DDO's and Vocation Advisers.
- * Readers to be encouraged to acknowledge their gifts and with advice to continue their ministry either as a Reader, or using their gifts; for example, in teaching, children's ministry, ministry to the elderly, chaplaincies, or pastoral care.
- * Wardens of Readers to be informed when a Reader is testing their vocation to the ordained ministry.
- * Prior to the Reader attending the BAP they need good preparation from the DDO's and Vocation Advisers. This might entail offering information regarding the local and national selection procedures and also, suggesting the preparation the Reader might carry out himself/herself, for example,

reading lists, talking to clergy, gaining experience within the local church or developing their daily routine of Bible reading and prayer.

The Church of England

- More formal procedures to be put in place within the dioceses for offering pastoral support when required.
- Designated persons appointed within the dioceses who would be available for offering support. This could be a priest or a Reader or someone with experience of pastoral support and counselling.
- A standardised system of Diocesan Advisory Panels to be provided that mirrors a national BAP.
- BAP selectors to be made aware of candidates who are Readers and their previous experience.
- The Bishop should prioritise meetings as soon as possible with Readers who are not selected in order to discuss their non-selection and also, to offer their pastoral support, encouragement, to pray with them and to offer comfort from the scriptures.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter the focus was on the final of the four steps in Osmer's model, namely, the pragmatic task (**Osmer** 2008:184), which seeks to answer the question: "How might we respond"? It had been shown how the previous research of the different preceding chapters, all flow together in order to show what way this research should be leading to as practical application in the church life. This chapter includes a part on reflexivity, where the researcher reflected on her own position as well as the process of the study.

General guidelines were offered regarding pastoral care and specific guidelines regarding pastoral care for Readers of the Church of England were also proposed. All the aforementioned research flow together in order to submit a statement towards the way forward regarding the issue of Readers in the Church of England and all it entails.

CHAPTER 6:

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS DERIVED FROM THE RESEARCH STUDY

6.1 Introduction

The aim of the research was to examine the level, range and type of pastoral support that would be beneficial to Readers who are rejected for the Anglican ordained ministry and to develop a form of pastoral support that may be utilised by the Church of England.

This study investigated the pastoral support of Licensed Lay Ministers (Readers) in the Church of England nationally. The central argument being that in many cases inadequate pastoral care is being offered to Church of England Readers who are unsuccessful after attending a Bishops Advisory Panel and therefore are not recommended for ordination training.

The central research question therefore is: “How may adequate sensitive support be offered to Church of England Readers following rejection for the ordained ministry and who best might deliver it?”

The research was divided into seven chapters. The purpose of Chapter one was to present a background to the research question and the objectives, purpose and methodology of the research. The questions relating to the research problem were formulated in the following way:

- What within the Church of England constitutes adequate, appropriate sensitive support for Readers determining to what extent provision is already made and evaluating how and by whom it might be delivered.
- How can a practical way be devised to evaluate the appropriate pastoral support for the needs of unsuccessful Readers following a Bishops Advisory Panel.

- How does the empowerment of the Gospels, through the biblical themes and images portray Jesus' pastoral ministry?
- What do the findings derived from this investigation show and how may they be used to formulate a strategy for providing adequate and sensitive pastoral support to those Readers who have experienced an unsuccessful Bishop's Advisory Panel?
- What feasible recommendations might be made to the Church of England regarding the pastoral support of rejected Readers in the future.

6.2 Research Design.

Chapter two was the descriptive/empirical task and is concerned with finding a practical way of ascertain the views of those Readers who were unsuccessful at a Bishop's Advisory Panel, regarding their personal experience and whether being a licensed Reader made any difference in the selection process. Personal interviews were used to evaluate how the Readers reacted to the experience of being observed by selectors for three days in a semi-artificial situation.

A key point that was expressed is that many were confused by what they went through. Many Readers anticipated that they would have their Reader ministry acknowledged by the selection panel, which was not the case.

Their responses conveyed an overall feeling of distress and bewilderment.

Chapter three looked at the interpretive task and sought to determine what constitutes adequate sensitive support for unsuccessful Readers, who might offer this support and what support is already available with the dioceses. I examined data received through personal interviews with Licensed Lay Ministers (Readers) from a number of dioceses where I was seeking to ascertain to what extent the Church of England already makes provision for the situation. The roles of Spiritual Directors, Directors of Ordinands and Wardens of Readers were investigated.

Investigated, also, was, how much support is provided by the Church of England Dioceses for Readers following an unsuccessful Bishops Advisory Panel. Groups of

Wardens of Readers and Diocesan Directors of Ordinands were contacted and asked to complete questionnaires (annexure 1 and 2) regarding whether Readers were treated any differently to non-licensed candidates seeking ordination training. A key issue is that there are so many variations within the responding dioceses regarding the roles of Diocesan Directors of Ordinands and Wardens of Readers. This leads to Readers (who are not treated any differently to other ordination candidates) unclear to whom they might contact when needing pastoral care.

Chapter four is concerned with the normative task and asks what the Bible tells us regarding the pastoral support for ministry. The four Gospels were examined to identify the theological basis of pastoral support for ministers. In this case it is relating to Licensed Lay Ministers (Readers) in the Anglican Church.

Key issues are:

- The centrality of pastoral care has to be at the heart of the Gospels.
- Jesus' caring ministry can be shown through biblical imagery.
- Scripture is the vital resource for the pastor.
- Pastoral care begins with the whole church and therefore is not the sole function of ordained ministers.

Chapter Five evaluated the previous chapters and collated the findings of the investigations with a view to formulating a universal system of sensitive pastoral care within the Church of England.

A key point is that there does not seem to be a clear picture from the dioceses who responded, regarding who the Reader might contact if in need of Pastoral support, following a Bishops Advisory Panel and subsequent non-recommendation for ordination training.

Final Conclusion. This study originated from my role as Diocesan Continuing Ministerial Development Officer for Readers and Recognised Lay Ministers. Part of that role seeks to encourage further education and training. This is undertaken in liaison with the Warden of Readers and Ministry Development Advisers. The second part is aiding in the discernment of Readers who are testing their calling to ordained ministry.

The study focussed on the discernment process, preparation, personnel involved and the process of the Bishops Advisory Panel for ordination training selection. The question asked was Who might offer adequate sensitive support to Church of England Readers following rejection for ordination training?

All the Diocesan Directors of Ordinands and Wardens of Readers were sent questionnaires. (See annexures) Though not all dioceses responded, due partly to changes in staffing and information received from Church House in London not being up to date. The responses received demonstrated and magnified the differences of the personnel appointed to oversee the pastoral care (not only Readers) within these dioceses.

The research showed that all dioceses have some system of support in place though this is not formally recognised by the Readers and leads to some confusion. It was clear that Reader ministry and experience is not taken into account when Readers themselves are seeking ordination training. There are clergy who still see Reader ministry as “second class” even though the Church of England is aiming for a more collaborative ministry.

My overall conclusion is that pastoral support is essential for Readers who are unsuccessful in achieving their ‘calling’ for the ordained ministry in the Church of England

6.3 Recommendations for further study.

The research for this qualitative study covered two thirds of the Church of England Dioceses. The sample provided an opportunity to investigate the practices of pastoral support offered to Reader. This sample covered Diocesan Directors of Ordinands, Wardens of Readers and Readers who had experienced the disappointment of not being accepted for ordination training.

Further research questions may need to be investigated to gain a fuller picture around the Church of England.

How can the candidates be better prepared prior to attending a Bishop' Advisory Panel?

How can the dioceses offer support through designated people?

What can further research on the Four Gospels of the New Testament reveal on pastoral Care?

How can difficulties around disappointed expectations be managed so as to maintain supportive relationships between clergy and Readers?

Other denominations. Further research needs to be undertaken within the Baptist and Methodist churches regarding similar matters.

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ADDENDUM A: Replies to questionnaire sent to Diocesan Directors of Ordinands.

Numbers refer to question on main questionnaire.

Y-Yes

N-NO

Diocese	DDO Follow up	Other support by a team member	Finding own support	Team of people in place formally	Diocesan Support eg Counselling	Long Term support
A	Y	Y	N	N	N	N
B	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N
C	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y
D	N	Y	N	N	N	Y
E	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
F	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
G	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y
H	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
I	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N
J	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N
K	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
L	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
M	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N
O	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y
P	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Q	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N
R	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N
TOTAL	Y 15 N 3	Y 16 N 2	Y 8 N 10	Y 5 N 13	Y 12 N 6	Y 8 N 10

ADDENDUM B: Replies to questionnaire sent to Diocesan Wardens of Readers

Numbers refer to question on main questionnaire

Y = Yes N = No

Diocese	1 Initial Notification to Warden	2 Need more support	3 Initial follow up	4 Own support	5 Contact details	6 Notification of outcome	7 Warden expertise
A	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
B	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y
C	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y
D	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N
E	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
F	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
G	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y
H	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y
I	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N
J	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
K	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y
L	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y
M	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y
N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
O	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y
P	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N
Q	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y
R	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y
S	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
T	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y
U	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y
V	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y
W	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
X	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y
Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y
Z	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N
AA	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y
BB	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y

Diocese	1 Initial Notification to Warden	2 Need more support	3 Initial follow up	4 Own support	5 Contact details	6 Notification of outcome	7 Warden expertise
CC	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y
TOTALS	N 13 Y 16	N 23 Y 6	N 23 Y 6	N 21 Y 8	N 16 Y 13	N 0 Y 29	N5 Y 24

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Replies to questionnaire sent to Diocesan Directors of Ordinands.

The following questions were asked and comments received (see Annexure A).

I. After attending a conference would the DDO be expected to supply follow-up support initially?

Y = 15 N = 3

The following comments were made:

- Follow-up would be provided by a Vocations Adviser who would see the Reader once only. (N)
- One DDO Comments that she knows many Readers who are still disappointed and hurt years after non-selection at a panel and one or two Readers who will just not move on despite help and encouragement from the diocese and church. (Y)
- During the process the DDO gets to know the candidate well, so would offer initial support, but not long-term ongoing support, as they would be encouraged to organise their own long-term support if still needed. (Y)
- Every candidate that goes to BAP has a debrief meeting afterwards with the DDO. During discernment afterwards candidates are welcome and invited to see the DDO as many times as they like. (Y)
- Non- recommended candidates are prayed for as they discern 'what is the next right stage'. It may mean going back to a BAP in 2 years or less. It may mean not going to another BAP. (Y)
- The DDO would give immediate comments/support and then refer to the Warden of Readers. (Y)
- The DDO has a responsibility in conjunction with the parish for follow-up care.(Y)
- Initial support would fall within the DDO's brief and role. (Y)
- The DDO would talk through with the candidate some alternatives for ministerial development. (Y)

- The DDO would offer information on support mechanisms and put the Reader in touch as required. (Y)
- The DDO would give full support initially and for as long as needed.(Y)

II. Would support be supplied by anyone else in the team?

Yes = 16 No = 2

The following comments were made:

- Usually the candidate would be referred back to the Vocations Adviser to provide longer term support and help them to look to the future which may include looking at other avenues for their future ministry. (Y)
- Counselling is available within the diocese if the candidate would like it. The choice is the Readers. (Y)
- The Warden of Readers is always notified by the DDO and asked to offer the initial support. This could be long or short term depending on the pastoral needs of the particular Reader.. (Y)
- There is no formal procedure in place within the diocese but support probably given by Warden of Readers or the vocations adviser if requested. (N)
- The Vocations Adviser deals with all non-recommended candidates and initially offers some short-term support. (Y)
- The Reader may have to find his/her own support mechanisms after an initial de-brief with DDO. (N)
- There are other support mechanisms in place within the diocese. The Reader can request support. (Y)
- The Diocesan Counselling Team would be called in as necessary to give support as required. The Reader would need to request support as and when needed. (Y)

- Following a Bishop's Advisory Panel, emphasis is placed on the incumbent's role in offering pastoral care/support to their Reader. (Y)
- The parish and incumbent would be responsible for any follow-up care/support that was needed. As a diocese we do not offer further support after the initial de-briefing with the DDO. (Y)

III. Would the Reader be expected to find his/her own support?

Y = 8 N = 10

The following comments were made:

- Most candidates would have their own support network in place. (Y)
- The DDSO would have a conversation first with the Parish priest with the aim that he/she would provide pastoral support at this time. (N)
- The DDO would check with the candidate that they have a robust support network in place, friends, peers etc.(N)
- The DDO with the help of the Warden of Readers would offer advice. (N)
- The Reader may be happy to find his/her own support after an unsuccessful BAP. (Y)
- The DDO would be the focal point for follow on support. (N)
- DDO would follow-up the candidate for a short time only.(N)

IV. Is there a team of people in place to offer pastoral support?

Yes = 5 No = 13

The following comments were made:

- The diocese has the DDO and ADDO's, a team of Vocation Advisers and two Diocesan Counsellors/Pastoral Support Workers to offer support if required. (Y)
- Pastoral support is expected to come primarily from the Reader's parish. A designated team is not in place.(N)
- The diocese has DDO's, Vocation Advisers, a Director of Formation and Ministry all of whom may offer support. (Y)

V. There may be clergy who feel that they do not have the pastoral experience to offer support to their Reader colleagues at this time (especially those Readers who say that the church has rejected them and they are experiencing a loss of faith). Would the diocese offer support?

Yes = 12 No = 6

The following comments were made:

- The diocese would probably offer support if felt necessary, but only if the Reader sought this.(Y)
- Counselling is available from the diocese and can be requested by the Reader or Warden of Readers on their behalf. (Y)
- If the DDO knew the parish situation was strained between the Reader and the Incumbent he/she would set up alternative pastoral support for the Reader. (Y)
- Resources are limited within the diocese therefore we do not have the facilities for offering counselling or help for clergy.(N)

VI. Would the Ministry team (DDO's, Vocation Advisers, others) offer long term support if required?

Yes = 8 No = 10

The following comments were made:

- Depends on the Reader's circumstances personally and parish wise. (Y)
- Support for the Reader would be reduced over time and cease after 3-6 months. They would then have to find their own support network if further support was needed. (N)
- It is felt in this diocese that Readers need to move on to new areas and not cling to past hopes.(N)
- Extended support offered, but resources are limited and therefore this would need to be assessed for each Reader.(Y)
- Candidates/Readers are welcome to see the DDO as many times as they would like. (Y)

ADDENDUM B:

Replies from questionnaire sent to Diocesan Wardens of Readers regarding Pastoral on the Church of England website under the Ordination category.

Letter to Wardens of Readers.

The questions asked were:

1 Would the Warden of Readers be notified of any Reader attending a Bishop's Advisory Panel?

Yes = 16 No = 13

The following comments were made:

- There are two part-time DDO's in the diocese, and from time to time a list has been sent to the Warden of Readers of those in discussion with the DDO. Sometimes this has been due to the Warden asking, as it is not done on a regular basis. No doubt there are those Readers who start the process and the Warden is unaware of this.(N)
- It is always part of the arrangement with the DDO that all Readers are told they must inform the Warden of their meeting with him. The Warden is then updated with the candidate's progress.(Y)
- As the Warden of Readers and the DDO work closely together, it is almost certain that the DDO would make the Warden aware informally that a Reader was attending a Bishops' Advisory Panel though there is nothing written down about it. (Y)
- The Warden usually, though not always, knows if a Reader is attending a BAP –either he/she hears on the grapevine, or sometimes the Reader makes a point of telling him/her themselves.(Y)
- Sometimes they talk to the Warden first about whether they should start the process of exploring ordained ministry. There is no automatic process whereby the DDO tells the Warden that there are Readers amongst enquirers in the diocese. (N)

- The Readers would usually inform the Warden themselves and keep him/her up to date with progress. (Y)
- Wardens of Readers are part of the Ministry Development team so there is good communication between those looking after Readers and those who look after ordinands. Therefore the Warden would normally know of any Reader going to a BAP. (Y)
- One diocese has introduced a protocol about this so that the Warden will always be notified by the DDO as a Reader begins the process leading up to a BAP.(Y)
- As a member of the Bishop's staff and working closely with the vocations team the Warden would be informed. There are Readers who do not want it to be too widely known, both within their parishes and deanery, so the Warden is careful not to engage during this process unless the candidate reveals a wish to have his/her awareness.(Y)
- The Warden is notified as a matter of course by the DDO or vocations adviser as soon as the candidate begins to explore the call to ordination. (Y)
- The Warden is normally told by the DDO when Readers are going through the process but this is not done in a formal way, and so relies on conversations. (Y)

2. Would you consider that Readers who are in licensed ministry may need more support after non-selection for ordained ministry?

Yes = 6 No = 23

The following comments were made:

- All those, whether a Reader or not, who experience the BAP outcome of 'rejection' will need support. Readers are not offered more support.(N)
- Realistically – however well the system works it is hard for anyone who has invested enough of themselves into getting as far as a BAP to be turned down

without some sense of rejection, but this is probably magnified for those already in licensed ministry. (Y)

➤ The Warden would always be willing to give support, but it has never happened in one particular diocese as there have been no unsuccessful candidates as they are all well prepared beforehand. (Y)

➤ This has not occurred before now. The impact of not being recommended for training would vary from person to person, regardless of being a Reader or not. But the outcome might impact detrimentally on the Reader's ministry, therefore special attention would be merited. (Y)

➤ It varies with every person and every context. Some might find it harder than others to continue with a very public role, if they are not successful at a BAP. Some will have thought it through carefully and have embraced the option of carrying on with Reader ministry in a positive way. Others may seek to widen their ministry in other ways. (N)

➤ A BAP rejection can lead to any person feeling undermined in everything that they are already doing. Readers are not offered extra support. (N)

➤ Not necessarily, as most of the Readers who have explored ordination in my diocese have been recommended for training. (N)

➤ The Warden would certainly be available and would make the relevant Deanery Sub-warden aware of the situation so that the relevant support might be offered. (Y)

3. After attending a panel would the Warden be expected to supply initial follow-up support as part of his/her role?.

Yes = 6 No = 23

The following comments were made:

➤ This is not included in the job description and I am very rarely told if a Reader has been to a BAP. (N)

- Even if he/she was not considered as the appropriate person the Warden would ensure that support was in place. (Y)
- There are no formal procedures in place for support from the Warden, but some involvement is likely from the Warden or (more likely) deanery sub-warden. (N)
- If the Warden knew about a Reader attending a BAP and discovered that they were unsuccessful he/she would always offer initial support on a personal basis, but the formal follow-up and support is the DDO's responsibility in conjunction with the sending parish. (N)
- Readers may find their own support if they wish or felt that they needed it. We do not offer support unless it is requested personally by the Reader.(N)
- There are other support mechanisms in place but most of the pastoral support is undertaken by deanery sub-wardens who would know the Readers well. (N)
- The Warden is not expected to offer any initial support, but if asked certainly would, but more likely it would be the archdeaconry and deanery wardens who are closer at hand. (N)
- The vocations adviser deals with all non-recommended candidates in the diocese. (N)
- The Warden would not be expected to do any follow-up; as yet, we have not had an unsuccessful candidate. (N)

4. Would the Readers be expected to find their own support if needed and would they know who to contact?

Yes = 8 No = 21

The following comments were made:

- In one diocese there are 3 archdeaconry deputy Wardens who will know some Readers in their area better than the Warden – so they could be a resource. Possibly does not happen currently. (N/Y)

- Readers are responsible adults and therefore capable of finding their own support. (Y/N) Nothing is offered on a formal basis.
- The DDO follows up so they do not need to find their own support. Many still find their own support, if they wish. (N)
- Find own support if they wish. (Y/N) They can contact the Warden informally who may offer support.
- Parish and incumbent are encouraged to offer support in the first instance. If this is not applicable then they may contact the DDO or Warden of Readers.(N)
- Information is given to the Diocesan Counselling Service and emphasis given on the incumbent's role in pastoral care. (N/Y)
- The DDO and Vocations Advisers would give full support before, during and after the process – but the Reader would be expected to have a good relationship with the incumbent and Spiritual Director. The Warden is probably not involved. (N/Y)
- The DDO would offer support mechanisms. This may include a formal referral from the Warden of Readers but not necessarily. The Warden would contact any candidates not recommended and arrange to see them – but this is the Warden's choice rather being a formal process. (N/Y)
- One Warden states that he hopes that he would be there to support the Reader and could also direct them to other necessary support. As with all situations it takes a while to communicate the availability to Readers in general. (N/N)
- Our diocesan office is very proactive in letting the Warden know about situations that he should be aware of. (N)
- All Readers know what resources are available and who to contact for pastoral support. (N/Y)

5. Would the Warden be notified of the outcome of the panel, for example by the DDO or Vocations Adviser?

Yes = 13 No = 16

The following comments were made:

- The Warden would only know about a conference date if the Readers themselves told him/her that they are going to a conference, in which case he/she might ask the Director of Ministry 2 weeks later what the outcome was. (N)
- The Warden would not be informed as a matter of course. It would be left up to the Reader to contact the Warden if they wanted him/her to know. (N)
- The Warden is not informed formally and perhaps not informally. This is left to the Reader. (N)
- The Warden is very often not included in the distribution letter that goes from the Bishop to the candidate, so therefore they would not know unless told by the Reader. (Y)
- The Warden is not told automatically, but as Diocesan Warden he/she is a member of Bishop's staff and therefore should know. (Y)
- The Warden is always informed every time a Reader is sent the Bishop's letter. They may then contact the Reader. (Y)
- This has not happened yet, which will need checking with the DDO. The Warden feels that it should happen as a matter of course. In the past Wardens of Readers were also Associate DDO's, so formal mechanisms were not necessary. (N)

6.Do Readers have the Wardens contact details?

Yes = 29 No = 0

The following comments were made:

- All Readers have the Warden's e-mail and phone details (Y)
- All Readers have the Warden's full details. (Y)
- Details are in the Diocesan Directory so always available to Readers. (Y)

- There is open access to the Warden and Archdeaconry Wardens for Readers (Y)
- Readers pick up the phone or e-mail the Warden with all sorts of requests and queries, both church related and personal. (Y)
- Readers are visited by the warden in their own parishes as a normal routine procedure. (Y)
- There is a system of archdeaconry wardens – one ordained and one a Reader in each archdeaconry' plus Warden of Readers and all can be contacted. (Y)
- Diocesan Warden of Readers is on the Bishop's staff with a Deputy who is a Reader. Both can be contacted. (Y)
- Readers can contact the Warden over any matters and have access to their details. (Y)
- Details of the Wardens are in the relevant Diocesan Handbook but not all Readers have access to a copy. But Wardens can be contacted through the Diocesan Office. (Y)

7. If you were approached by a Reader who was distressed over the panel outcome would you as Warden of Readers feel that you had the expertise to deal with the unsuccessful candidate who might call upon you for pastoral support?

Yes = 25 No = 4

The following comments were made:

- The Warden would not necessarily have the expertise and may seek advice from a colleague. (N)
- Not alone, states one warden, 'As I feel that I would need support from diocesan staff. (N)
- The Warden would be willing to be a listening ear and a shoulder to cry on. (Y)

- The Warden knows the DDO, Vocations Adviser and Director of Formation and Ministry well enough to ask them for advice/information. (Y)
- Mostly yes, though some Readers may not wish to be supported by the Warden. In this case details of a pastoral care person would be offered to the Reader. (Y)
- As a Warden/Bishops Adviser it is hoped that they would recognise when they had reached the appropriate limit of support but could offer the Reader alternative resources. (Y)
- The pastoral support team in the diocese would always be involved at the Warden's request. (Y)
- The hands-on connection for on-going support is best done locally through their parish, although the Warden may have the expertise. (Y)

Holding the post of a BAP selector, Bishop's examining Chaplain for clergy and being a former Vocations Adviser is a great help in offering pastoral support to unsuccessful Readers. (Y)

Extra comments were added by Wardens.

The questionnaire raised some interesting questions which we will consider (offered by two dioceses).

- Lots of things happen which are not known about, thus enabling people to fall through the net.
- In selecting Readers, the Warden has become very aware of a much more 'joined up' thought process about vocation than he has encountered in previous dioceses. In assessing a person's suitability for training the diocese looks at where their vocation might lie rather than say 'yes/no' about a particular ministry. The Warden would want to review their pattern of Reader ministry with them and explore other vocational possibilities; for example, Lay Pastor or a chaplain – as appropriate.

- This research has helped me (Warden) to think through some issues about our procedure in my diocese and hopefully I can move things forward in a positive way.
- Comment from Bishop Robert Paterson (Sodor and Man) and Chair of the Central Readers' Council. "In offering support the Bishop should prioritise meetings with the candidates who have not been recommended for training. The DDO needs to work with the Bishop and his office so that this vital pastoral care is given as soon as possible."

ADDENDUM C: Areas covered at a Church of England Bishop's Advisory Panel include:

Vocation

- Are they aware of developmental and non- developmental issues?
- Have they discerned vocational and deployment issues?
- Do they have a knowledge of and commitment to the Church of England?

Spirituality

- Are they aware of developing and world engaging issues?
- Do they have a sense of their own spirituality?

Personality and Character including self-awareness and acceptance

- Do they show maturity, emotional stability, integrity and self-confidence?
- Do they show a potential for self-development and growth?

Relationships including healthy personal relationships, healthy professional and pastoral relationships

- Are they able to relate to different people and exercise effective pastoral care?
- Can they accept standards of sexual morality?

Leadership and collaboration showing a knowledge and understanding of Leadership

- Do they have the potential for exercising creative leadership?
- Can they exercise team leadership and have good communication skills?
- Can they work collaboratively with others?

Faith Reflecting on their personal commitment to the Christian faith.

- Do they show knowledge and understanding of and are they able to communicate their faith effectively?
- Have they a respect for other faiths?

Mission and evangelism To determine the extent of knowledge and understanding of mission and evangelism, including communication skills.

- Can they enable others in mission and engage with mission shaped ministry?

Quality of mind To determine the ability to learn and be open to learning formation.

- Do they show a flexibility of mind and are they able to reflect?

Pastoral Care

- Can they respond by letter to a pastoral care situation?

ADDENDUM D:

Selection criteria for Readers

(Central Readers Council 2010) From 2010 the criteria for Reader selection is based upon Readers as lay theologians of the church, who are rooted outside the church and who are able to reflect theologically upon their role.

Page 7 (Fig 1) Outlines all the similarities within the two roles.

A Vocation

Articulate a clear call to Reader ministry

Demonstrate that their vocation has been recognised by others

Be obedient to the authority of the Bishop

Understand the role and duties of a Reader

Fulfil realistically all the criteria for the selection of Readers.

B Integrity of Faith and Life

Display an integrity in the relationship between faith and life. Demonstrate the ability why they envisage that their potential ministry would be best expressed by remaining lay and how they might grow.

Have an understanding of the key beliefs of the church as expressed in the scriptures and the creeds.

Show an understanding of the loving and saving purposes of Christ in the whole world.

Say what excites and enthuses them in their faith, which they would wish to share with others.

Have a disciplined approach to personal prayer and public worship,

Be open to exploring different expressions of faith and spirituality.

C Theological learning

Display an attitude for coping with the intellectual demands of Reader ministry

Display an attitude for learning and be able to respond to ideas.

Respond appropriately to criticism

Read broadly

D Reflective skills

Be able to make connections between different kinds of experience (church, community, intellectual, spiritual)

Be self-aware and able to recognise strengths and weaknesses

Display awareness of the global context and be able to relate it to the local church.

Show creativity in analysing and interpreting experiencing

Be able to encourage others in the reflective process

E Communication skills

Be able to talk about Jesus Christ and the good news of the Kingdom of God in a way that is exciting, accessible and attractive.

Show the potential for expressing themselves well in preaching, conversation and writing.

Communicate well in language that people understand.

Articulate their faith naturally and effectively in ways that are balanced, appropriate, accessible and sensitive to the situation.

F Relationships

Form, develop and .maintain healthy personal, professional and pastoral relationships.

Generate trust and display honesty

Work well and collaboratively in a team setting

Be able to assume a leadership role when required

Be able to receive feedback in constructive ways

Demonstrate listening and empathetic skills

Maintain boundaries and confidentiality

G Coping with change

Be able to demonstrate the potential to cope with change in a balanced and flexible way.

Be able to collaborate well in engaging with change.

H Involvement in the Church of England

Show knowledge and understanding of the life and structures of the Church of England, including its place in the life of the nation

Display an awareness of the opportunities and challenges that the church faces in engaging with contemporary society, especially in terms of mission and evangelism.

Be able to reflect on the role played by scripture, tradition and reason within the heritage and contemporary life of the Church of England.

Demonstrate that they have been baptised and episcopally confirmed, and that they are regular communicants within the Church of England.