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## 'Official' recognition and effective lay Ministry in the Diocese of Chelmsford

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'OFFICIAL' RECOGNITION AND  
EFFECTIVE LAY MINISTRY  
IN THE DIOCESE OF CHELMSFORD

**'OFFICIAL' RECOGNITION AND**  
**EFFECTIVE LAY MINISTRY**  
**IN THE DIOCESE OF CHELMSFORD**

Dissertation submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts  
(Adult Education with Theological Reflection) in the  
University of Liverpool in part fulfilment of the Modular  
Programme in Adult Education with Theological Reflection  
October 1999

by SHEILA LLOYD

This work is original and has not been submitted previously  
in support of any qualification or course. Signed

## ABSTRACT

### AIM

My aim has been to explore the value lay people in the Church of England today attach to "official" recognition in encouraging them to exercise a ministry. My own experience both of parish ministry and tutoring a diocesan course of Christian education convinced me that there was a wealth of gifts amongst lay people which was in danger of being unrecognised or at least seriously undervalued. Three factors appeared particularly significant.

\* Firstly the lack of any universal recognition for lay ministry apart from Readers.

\* Secondly the perception of a lay/clerical divide. Despite the biblical picture of the church as a body with many equal but different parts, clergy have been seen as the paid professionals and laity as the amateur volunteers. Yet at parochial level the laity, mostly unlicensed, have taken a significant role in the running of the local church and its outreach to the community.

\* Thirdly the rapid changes in contemporary postmodern society. Most lay people are now used to role definition, recognition, and job specification in secular employment. Moreover changing patterns in both family life and the employment field have started a revolution, in consequence of which a vast army of lay women is rapidly disappearing from 'active service' in the church.

### METHOD

I have relied heavily on unstructured interviews with a number of past students from the Chelmsford Diocesan Course in Christian Studies for which I was a senior tutor. To balance these I also interviewed lay people from my own church who had not undertaken this course. My aim was to focus on the perceptions of lay people themselves. I also drew on research material from a follow-up survey of CCS students and information about a range of current diocesan schemes of lay training as well as studying current literature and thinking on this subject.

### RESULTS

I found that certain common issues arose from my interviews. Lay people valued highly both the "official" recognition of a formal diocesan scheme and the informal affirmation of their role and gifts by clergy within their local church. They also viewed lay education as foundational to any ministry, both stimulating it and giving confidence to exercise it. In considering this lay perspective and also taking into account Scriptural tradition, the contemporary cultural context, and the current diversity of diocesan practices, I make a case for:

\* *Appropriate training and commissioning of all confirmed church members as disciples called to Christian service*

\* *National recognition of lay pastoral ministry in the local church*

\* *A reformed permanent diaconate incorporating many who currently exercise a ministry as Readers, Non-Stipendiary Ministers and Ordained Local Ministers.*

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## INTRODUCTION

I have been involved as a lay person in unpaid parish ministry for over twenty years as a vicar's wife and more recently as a Reader in churches which do not have a large professional congregation. In that time I have discovered a wealth of gifts among lay people, many of whom who do not see themselves as natural leaders. In addition for six years I worked as a tutor and then senior tutor on the Chelmsford Diocesan Course in Christian Studies (CCS: see Appendix 3). Students who enrolled on this two year course came from a great range of backgrounds and churchmanship. Over those two years their gifts emerged, their faith and confidence grew, as did their desire to use their learning and engage in some form of ministry. The question was, what paths were open to them?

It seemed to me that there was a treasury of God's 'amateurs' who were in danger of being unrecognised or at least seriously undervalued. For a few who felt academically able to undertake further study and to preach there was the possibility of Readership. For an even smaller number who were seen as the most able academically there was ordination. A few who did not really see themselves in either light but could find no other recognised channel for their ministry also tried for Reader training. The majority were left in uncertainty as to what their role or ministry should be - if any - given that there is no other officially recognised ministry currently in the Chelmsford diocese (see Appendix 2). Many of these expressed a keen desire for a diocesan scheme of lay pastoral ministry. At one point the possibility of such a scheme was under consideration and students eagerly hoped it would be available when they finished the CCS. However, despite the strong support and recommendation of senior tutors the scheme was not implemented.

As a member of the Diocesan Adult Education Group, in 1997 I undertook a follow-up survey of past CCS students (see Appendix 6). Given the interest in lay pastoral

ministry evident in my informal conversations with students, I was intrigued by the lack of request for pastoral assistant training in response to a question about further training. Why the discrepancy? Were students deterred from asking by the fact that the scheme had been abandoned? Can there be a sense of vocation to something that doesn't yet exist or isn't locally available?

The survey indicated that in some churches a wide range of service was undertaken by past CCS students. Again in informal conversation with some of these students I gained the strong impression that this was largely dependant on the encouragement of the local vicar. It made me reflect on the importance of a recognised role. Does recognition draw out gifts that would otherwise lie dormant? If so, is it enough for the vicar or PCC to acknowledge gifts or ministry within the local church or does 'official' recognition at diocesan or national level make a difference? If so, how?

There seemed to me to be a distinction in the minds of many lay people between a role or ministry which is defined and supported by an agreed diocesan or national structure and one which is exercised purely by agreement within a local church. The first was viewed as 'formal' or 'official' recognition; the other as an informal acknowledgement of ministry.

The other issue of deep significance I noted with regard to lay ministry were the changes in contemporary society over the last 20-30 years. Factors such as married women working in paid secular employment, increasingly long working hours for many, and men and women taking early retirement or enforced redundancy have a profound effect on the availability of lay people for the church's ministry. At the same time the current emphasis in secular employment on job specification, appraisal and contracts of employment may well affect the way in which lay people view their involvement in the ministry of the church.

So the discovery of treasure in the local church, the joy of working with CCS students, coupled with my observation of the changing nature of church life over the past twenty

years raised a number of questions in my mind:

*\* Is there a distinctive lay ministry? If so, what is it, and how does it differ from ordained ministry?*

*\* What constitutes an 'effective' lay ministry? Who decides?*

*\* How do lay people value themselves? How do they perceive themselves to be valued by their peers and by clergy?*

*\* Is 'official' or formal recognition preferable to informal recognition at parochial level? Is there a place for both?*

For my research I undertook a number of unstructured interviews with lay people from my own church and from the CCS in order to obtain first hand evidence, expecting that two different settings might provide both parallels and contrasts that would lend weight to my research. Whilst acknowledging that case studies are inevitably subjective I believe with Kirkwood that 'when impressions begin to accumulate and patterns emerge from a number of interviews...it is reasonable to assume that a significant theme has been identified.' [1989:120] It may be worth clarifying here that my research was confined to the ministry exercised by individuals, and did not include participation in a Leadership team. Valuable as these are, their effect on individual ministry is beyond the scope of this research.

Whilst taking account of contemporary writing on the nature of ministry, much of which is written from a clerical rather than lay perspective, my aim then was to listen primarily to the voices of lay people themselves and respond to their viewpoint. How important is the issue of recognition to THEM? Do THEY feel it will make a significant difference to the exercise of their ministry? In what form would THEY value recognition? In the first section these interviews with lay people provide the core evidence to be considered.

In examining issues about lay ministry I am aware that the church and its ministry are formed both by tradition with its roots in Scripture and by the cultural context in

which it continues its witness and mission. So in the second section I propose to look at relevant cultural changes as well as the origins and structure of ministry in the church and the changing roles of both lay and ordained ministry today. During the course of my interviews I found that certain common issues arose with regard to recognition - issues of gifting and vocation, education and power - which I will develop in the third section.

My research has strengthened my conviction that whilst preserving the unchanging message of the Gospel there needs to be a radical reappraisal of lay ministry in the Church of England today in the light of changing patterns of life and employment over the last thirty years. In reaching my conclusions I try to take account of Scriptural tradition, cultural context, the current diversity of diocesan practices, and the representative voices of lay people in making a case for:

*\* Local recognition of all confirmed church members as disciples called to Christian service.*

*\* National recognition of lay pastoral ministry in the local church.*

*\* A reformed permanent diaconate incorporating many who currently exercise a ministry as Readers, Non-stipendiary ministers and Ordained local ministers.*

## CHAPTER ONE A LAY PERSPECTIVE

My research involved around thirty interviews of 30-40 minutes each. All interviewees were active church members of varying ages, churchmanship and Christian experience. The interviews fall into two main categories:

[i] Former students of the Chelmsford Diocesan Course in Christian Studies

[ii] Fellow members of St. Paul's Church, Braintree

Interviewees were given suggested topics for discussion prior to the interview (see appendix 1), addressing the question: 'How important is 'official recognition' to the effective exercise of lay ministry at parochial and diocesan level?' It may be worth noting that none of those interviewed queried or asked for a definition of lay ministry. The assumption was that ministry referred to any identifiable form of service within the context of the church; and lay indicated not ordained. Kraemer argues that this distinction gives rise to a view of laity as objects in the church, whereas the true nature of the church is revealed when the laity is as fully subject as clergy. I will explore these concepts in more depth in chapter two.

*'A theology of the laity (should enable) an adult Christianity, a fraternal Christocracy, in which the weak and the strong, the simple and the educated, the influential and the common are nevertheless directed by one spirit and purpose, to be a real community in Christ..' [Kraemer 1965:119]*

### INTERVIEWS WITH FORMER CCS STUDENTS

I wrote to 40 former students asking for volunteers to assist with this research and interviewed all those who responded. They are a representative cross-section of students at the centre where I tutored, but as it was the only daytime centre at the time, there may have been a higher proportion of women at home as mothers or in part-time employment or retired than in some other centres. Of the 19 former students interviewed, 8 were by now training for or admitted to Reader or ordained ministry; two were

clergy wives; the rest were involved in service in their local church without any accredited role or title. In response to the interview questions, discussion centred around issues of identity and self-worth; recognition of vocation or calling; the acknowledgement (or lack of it) of their ministry by both clergy and other church members; and the place and value of education for lay Christian ministry.

## EDUCATION

Although there was no specific question about education, over and over again it became evident that the link between study undertaken on the CCS and any future ministry was seen as very important by all the students. Most, if not all, had joined the CCS without any specific goal apart from a desire to develop their knowledge of the Christian faith. Without exception all the interviewees who had gone on to Reader ministry had no such aim in mind when they embarked on the CCS. Yet by the end of the course all students had developed a desire to use, or build on, the knowledge and experience gained. Some wanted to pursue further study; others were keen to apply their new-found knowledge by involvement in service in their local church. There was an expectation that their education would be valued by others and used for further service. However some were bitterly disappointed and frustrated by the fact that their study had not been valued in their church by the vicar or other church members; others were disappointed at the lack of further training for specific areas of ministry such as leading groups.

Nonetheless as a consequence of their education students generally felt they personally had gained the confidence to undertake some ministry, and that other members of their church now had greater confidence in their competence to exercise that ministry. Students expected education, training and authorisation to go hand in hand, which led on to the whole question of recognition and authorisation.

## RECOGNITION

It may be of interest to note that none of the interviewees asked for a definition of 'recognition' but rather defined it for themselves by their own response. Terms were used such as 'authorisation', 'authority', 'accountability', 'official qualification', 'affirmation', 'having a label, a badge, a role, a title', all of which indicated something of their perceptions. Some common themes emerged in discussing recognition in general terms, the questions of confidence and authority proving central. Many felt they would value some form of recognition in giving them personal confidence to exercise a ministry. There was also an expectation that authorisation would lead to a greater exercise of ministry and enable ministry. *'The title gives you a job.'* [14] Even more importantly, recognition was seen as necessary to give others confidence in their competence and right to exercise a ministry. Other people could have legitimate expectations and there needed to be accountability. So in this respect, recognition was seen as giving authority. Indeed some felt there were or could be objections to any ministry exercised without a recognised role.

*'Basically if I was recognised, at least I'd have a label on me...if people ask "What do you do?" you could actually say "It's recognised by whatever - there are so many of us in the diocese."' [2]*

## VIEWS OF ACCREDITED ROLES

All the interviewees assumed that Readership and the ordained ministry constituted 'officially' recognised roles. For those who were training or established in such an accredited role their authority was seen to stem from a hierarchical system which both established a structure into which they fitted, and bestowed the right to exercise a ministry within it. For this reason several valued a visible sign of authority. The overall view was summed up as a human need for authorisation recognisable in some way by badge or title.

*'...you've got your rank if you like...it's like being in the army...so because the church is hierarchical you would need some title of some kind. The Reader*

*leading services does have that recognised role in the church...without a recognised title people wouldn't know where to put you.'* [4]

Readership was seen as 'a sort of commissioning' which endowed an acknowledged authority, giving greater confidence both to the Reader in the exercise of ministry and to others in accepting that ministry. However there were ambivalent views amongst interviewees as to the standing of Readers and the opportunities for them in ministry. Students who had gone on to ordination had done so because Readership felt restricting. In a more Anglo-catholic church ('Remember, we're higher up the candle than most!') Readership was seen as seriously undervalued, whilst the priesthood enjoyed elevated status.

*'The Reader is very much second-best..the role is not appreciated..somehow it's not valid.... our Reader sees herself as a frustrated priest.'* [9]

Others saw the expectations of Readership as too high for them, with the Reader on a par with clergy in preaching theological expertise.

*'The nitty-gritty is this blue stole business. ..Blue stole is a key issue.'* [5] *'Readership..is perceived as being more or less a vicar.'* [1]

Despite the fact that Readership is a licensed lay ministry with national recognition and authority, there was still a strong sense that in reality the exercise of that ministry was dependent almost entirely on the local vicar, and perhaps to some extent on the local congregation. Although the licence was valued, perhaps even viewed as essential, it was fraught with the clash of different perceptions and complicated by issues of power. Where the experience was positive it was greatly valued as affirming and enabling. However for a number this had proved a deeply frustrating and disabling experience

*'For two years [as a Reader] I was more a bum in the pew than doing anything else....I feel I've been humoured ...everything I do I feel manacled...I'm never allowed a free rein.'* [12]

Ordination was seen as superior to Readership with the focus on presidency of communion. Ordination was seen as

highly academic, very selective, and thus very discouraging to one interviewee who had a sense of vocation but did not feel she had academic skills. A distinction was made by some interviewees between priest and deacon, although a permanent diaconate does not exist at present in the Church of England. This possibility was seen as an attractive prospect which might draw more people into ministry.

#### IDENTITY AND SELF-WORTH

If there had to be a choice between a diocesan scheme authorising individual ministries (such as lay pastoral ministry) and one involving membership of a team ministry, generally preference was expressed for individual rather than corporate recognition because it was seen to bring more personal affirmation. This was not so much for selfaggrandisement - indeed a number battled with the Christian concept of humility and service. Were they wrong to aspire to any role or title? Should they not be willing to serve without any recognition? However the issue was far more one of self-worth. Many felt undervalued, unrecognised, used and taken for granted in the service they undertook without any recognised role. Uncertainty was evident, not only about their Christian service, but even about their Christian identity.

*'I feel I don't have a role. I feel it's just S...who's always been there. (With recognition) I would know where I stood... I get roped in to assist but I don't seem to belong in a working way. WHAT AM I? Sometimes you do begin to feel like a dogsbody. I'm like a lady of sixty years ago....'[6]*

A number expressed disappointment when the enthusiasm generated by attending the CCS received no encouragement.

*'When I finished the CCS I did feel someone might have been interested to talk to me, and say "How was it? Have you thought what you might like to do?" I was quite enthusiastic at that time. I thought I could run some group things...'* [16]

*'I didn't get any backing from the vicar (after going on a pastoral care course)...If he'd come up to me and said, "Right, I'd like you to go and visit so-and-so...it just gives you that bit of encouragement to go...it would have opened up a doorway...'[11]*

*'I was very disappointed (when nothing happened after the CCS)..... My enthusiasm waned. I feel like I'd like to be used, treated as if I can do more than make the cakes.'*[6]

The source of affirmation or recognition was thus important to many interviewees. Most looked for affirmation initially from the one responsible for their sphere of service - namely the vicar of their local church in most cases! However a number felt diocesan recognition gave more value when a role needed clear authorisation.

*'I'd want to be part of a wider set-up with wider recognition than my own parish... My background was nursing ..health visitor...it was a recognised qualification ...Unless you've got clear lines to the top you're just not efective. You have to have a structure. I'd want to be part of that.'*[1]

*'It needs wider recognition than the local vicar giving you a job...'*[2]

#### SENSE OF VOCATION OR CALLING

How far interviewees valued themselves and felt their Christian service valued by others linked in many cases with the question of vocation or calling. Some would not estimate themselves highly enough to describe the work they had undertaken as a call. They simply saw it as a need to which somebody had to respond. However it was very important to a number of interviewees to be asked to undertake a particular form of service in their local church. Affirmation, confidence and authority came from receiving a specific invitation, which in itself constituted a form of recognition. For those who had gone on to Reader or ordained ministry a key factor was also the suggestion or invitation of their vicar and the encouragement and support of Christian friends.

*'Everything I've done I've been asked to do..it would never occur to me to suggest myself to do anything - apart from cleaning the brass!'* [14]

Although one or two felt some sense of call from the outset, most expressed surprise at finding themselves undertaking a ministry to which they would never previously have considered themselves suited. For some a starting

point was the invitation to preach or lead a home group, a totally new venture, from which confidence grew 'step by step', leading to a sense of call. For some the selection process was seen as important to confirm a sense of call. For one or two though there was the heartbreak of a sense of call that had not been fulfilled or acknowledged when they had gone through the selection process and not been accepted for an accredited ministry. Yet they felt a persistent sense of God's call. Can you have a call if it is not acknowledged by those in power? Can you have a call if there is nowhere to go with it?

*'I felt so sure I was being called (to be a Reader), and I was being told by authority that God was not calling me... either I'd got it entirely wrong or authority which I respect very much had got it wrong, and either of those was mindblowingly awful.....God, I'm convinced, wants me to do something, and I just wish to goodness somebody could find me a way to do it.'* [3]

The fact that Reader training is the only accredited ministry available in the diocese and that the CCS is a necessary first step towards this was a compelling factor for many. Would they have considered other accredited lay ministries if they had been available? Most felt they would have liked a choice of options to consider; a couple felt if it had been available they would probably have chosen the option of lay pastoral assistant, though they had in fact become competent Readers. Some had a vague awareness of a role which might be right for them but which did not seem to be available.

*'I've not got a proper role; I've not got an official qualification; I'm not a Reader; I'm not a priest; I'm not a deacon. I'm frustrated that I can't be used properly...I feel like saying "Look at my files! Look at all the work I did! Look at my marks!"'* [9]

So the question arose again: does a recognised accredited ministry have to exist for there to be a sense of vocation to it? Can you have a call to something which isn't available for you such as the permanent diaconate, teaching or lay pastoral assistant?

## INTERVIEWS WITH MEMBERS OF ST. PAUL'S

St. Paul's, Braintree, is a small church with a congregation of about 100 in the less affluent east end of an Essex market town. The staff consists of a vicar, 2 Readers, and a pastoral/ eldership group (equivalent to a Ministry Leadership Team) which has been in place for nearly ten years. Lay involvement in all aspects of the church's life and worship is actively encouraged.

I conducted 8 individual interviews as well as discussion in 2 small groups with 6 people as part of a women's home group. All the individuals interviewed were active in service in a wide range of areas, although only 3 had what were considered to be 'official' roles - church warden, deputy church warden and PCC secretary. Others were involved in children's work, youth work, leading homegroups, Mother & toddler group, editing a church outreach magazine, outreach work and pastoral visiting. They covered a mixed range of ages from 20+ to 50+, men and women. Whilst basically the same issues were tackled as with CCS students (education & training, a sense of calling, local or diocesan recognition), the question of growth into Christian discipleship and informal recognition within the local church was of greater interest.

## ENTRY INTO DISCIPLESHIP

One interviewee gave a lovely description of Christian ministry as 'working disciples'. Another described how she had found membership of the church as a Body gave her a new identity, with growth in knowledge and spiritual life leading to the discovery of gifts and fresh avenues of service.

*'out in the world you can be a shelf-stacker or petrol pump assistant or whatever...but when you come home, what are you? Through the church God has reached me..It's like knowing your true self...it's deep isn't it? I found I had those gifts through coming to the church.'* [C3]

However a number, including the group of new Christians, expressed a natural lack of self-confidence and reticence to put themselves forward.

*'I wouldn't do anything unless I was asked. When someone asks you, they give you the confidence. They wouldn't ask you otherwise.'* [i]

*'It's hard to spot your own gifts...and if you do, you feel a bit reticent to say anything. You don't want to appear bigheaded...'* [D4]

So what had helped them move into the different areas of service they were involved in? There were clear parallels with the former CCS students. Some saw a need to which somebody had to respond, or a job for which they happened to be available. A small group who lacked confidence in themselves as individual leaders found strength in corporate leadership of a Mothers & Toddlers group. Several valued being 'apprenticed' and helped to grow into a leadership role, for example helping with a Home Group. One expressed how she could discern God's call through that. Most valued being asked. Generally there was an understanding that the leadership of the church had a responsibility to encourage others into discipleship - and then to work with them in a committed relationship.

## RECOGNITION

A few of the interviewees were in roles which were perceived to have 'official' recognition. Most were undertaking service which was informally recognised within the local church but was not considered to have any 'official' status. Their views on the importance of recognition, whether or not it was deemed to be 'official', were remarkably similar. A title clarifies your own awareness of the task and focuses other people's expectations; clear definition of the task is important and helpful. Incidentally I noted that the churchwarden and deputy churchwarden, who were both members of the pastoral/eldership group, assumed that recognition referred to their 'official' roles and did not relate it in any way to their membership of the leadership team.

*'It needs to be clearly defined so you know what your job is and what it isn't...if you've been ordained or you're a Reader you know what to do because you've had the training..there's not really anything else within the church that's actually clearly defined.'* [D4]

*'I don't think it's the title bit...it's knowing that it's channelled...you know where you are...I like to know where I'm heading. I feel really focused. I do feel I'm not very intelligent. I haven't got lots of exam results and qualifications, but I feel I know what I'm good at...'* [C3]

*'The deputy churchwarden giving you a title immediately gives other people the right to expect certain things from you.'* [B2]

Like the former CCS students, many of the interviewees struggled with issues of humility and self-aggrandisement. Was it wrong to look for recognition? There was a strong awareness that titles had little meaning or value without personal worth, yet they still felt that recognition in some form could give value to a person and their gifts. There was also the possibility that a defined role might encourage a sense of vocation. One interviewee suggested that gifts or potential gifts might not be drawn out unless they were focused towards a specific role.

Advantages and disadvantages to diocesan recognition were put forward. The point was made that the church is in the business of using and developing people's God-given gifts rather than fitting people into a predetermined mould. However one interviewee suggested that diocesan recognition of lay ministry would also benefit the wider church by giving an accurate indicator of the scale and annual growth of lay ministry being exercised in local churches. Generally diocesan recognition was seen to give authority, support, training and a potential focus to the task.

*'...If there was a recognised role now, people who do that job would be recognised. They'd be in their statistics - the diocese's reports, they'd be part of the official records. Whereas at the moment...the diocese, the church's bosses, haven't got any way of recognising that or how it would grow....every year they could say this is how much it's growing, people are going into lay ministry..."there's 900 in 96 and now there's..." ..there isn't any official way of knowing, is there?'* [C3]

Most discounted any aspirations to Readership themselves either for academic or practical reasons; equally there was a general assumption that ordination was not for them. However a number expressed enthusiasm for a Lay Pastoral

Ministry scheme which they saw would offer training, recognition and a focus for people's pastoral gifts.

#### EDUCATION AND TRAINING

With the CCS students it might be thought they would naturally emphasise the importance of education in their lay development. Would this be true, though, of local church members who in a number of cases would not consider themselves academic enough to embark on a course such as CCS or Reader training? Though I did not raise it as a question, in the course of discussion I discovered that ten of those interviewed had completed the two year '2.7' course in Christian discipleship (see Appendix 4) and saw that as both foundation and springboard for any subsequent Christian service they had undertaken. The parallel with the experience of CCS students was striking. Those active in Christian service saw a link between education and ministry. Equally newer Christians in the small group discussion expressed a need for Christian education before undertaking any form of service.

*'I'd like to volunteer for visiting...but if I had to have knowledge of the Bible I wouldn't do it. I'd welcome some training in Christian basics to help me.'*[i]

It was remarkable that most interviewees made a distinction between the value of general Christian education per se and specific training. Nonetheless one interviewee graphically described the difficulty in explaining WHY Christian education was valuable.

*'When you start talking to people about what you're doing on the '2.7 course' .."Oh, what's that then?" "Oh, it's a church course" "Oh, what you gonna be a vicar then?"'*[C3]

Very few had been on a specific course of training for a particular role or area of ministry. One or two had been on occasional day courses but generally it was felt that little was available outside the local church. Nonetheless training would be welcomed if it was available and the fact that a recognised role would entail training was valued. A

close link was again seen between training, recognition and authority.

## PARALLELS

There were, then, some differences of perspective between the two groups of interviewees, but the parallels were remarkably strong. It was evident that all interviewees felt the need for encouragement to undertake service within their local church, and looked principally to their clergy for this. Those who had undertaken a course of Christian education, whether diocesan or parochially based, set great store by this as a foundation and stimulus for their ministry. Generally there was a respect for authorised ministry and an appreciation of the value of a recognised role with structure and training.

I now wanted to explore how these issues related to possible future ministry in the Church of England in a postmodern society, one which Tiller describes as '*permissive, pluralistic, post-Romantic, post-industrial, and post-Christian*' [1983:16]. The task of the Church has always been to relate the apostolic faith to contemporary culture, relevant to it but not dictated by it, open to change yet remaining true to its roots.

*'Historically creative changes in models of ministry appear to have come about through the need to preach the Gospel in changed circumstances and situations and within the context of differing cultural and political backgrounds.'* [Hypher 1995/83: 94]

In the next chapter I aim to consider briefly what characterises our contemporary culture and the Church's heritage of ministry, before reflecting in the third chapter on the issues themselves.

## CHAPTER TWO THE CHURCH TODAY

*'The Church exists in a complex state of interaction with its surrounding culture. Where it asserts too much autonomy from the culture, it is in danger of becoming a sect; where it allows that autonomy to disappear, it is in danger of being blown about by every change in the prevailing wind.'* [Cockerell 1989:120]

*'A danger with too ready an acceptance of dominant secular models is that we may overlook the implicit theology which underpins them. We may fail to bring a Christian critique to bear.'* [Bunting 1993: 22]

### CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

What then characterises our surrounding culture and what are the implications for the ministry of lay Christians? Tidball describes the Western world today as 'a world without windows - a closed system which has no place for a supernatural dimension..' He suggests that the secularisation of society is 'The replacement of God at the centre by man at the centre'...and highlights technology, bureaucracy and pluralism as factors which contribute to a secular society alienated from the Gospel.

*'Man has created a world where God has been squeezed out and where it is not only increasingly difficult to believe in God, but also increasingly unnecessary to do so.'* [1987: 14,17-18,26,78]

The picture is developed by a number of other modern writers. In this 'very mobile secular society' [Hypher 1995/83:92] secular assumptions, materialism and 'globalisation which seems to leave humankind powerless to resist its momentum'[Morisey 1997: 124] appear to dominate. Hull suggests that 'The assumptions of secularised modernity...are regarded as being simply the way life is supposed to be.' [1991:34] The Christian mission then is in and to a world which has experienced '..the abandonment of universal standards of meaning, truth and behaviour.' [Jones 1996:19] Holloway argues that '...(modern) man experiences life as regret and restlessness...unable to understand his own existence...strangely lost in the wilderness of being.' [1974: 36-38] So Christianity becomes

one of the countless goods - or gods- on offer in the supermarket of 20th century living. [Appignanesi, 1995:150]

### THE CHURCH'S TASK

Finding common ground is vital but needs to be undertaken reflectively. [see *Something to Celebrate* 1995: 204; Tiller 1983:64] The Church of England has attempted to address some of the issues thrown up by the rapid changes in society with a series of reports in recent years. Reports such as *Faith in the City* [1985] attempt to give a vision of a church which is local and participative. Others such as *All God's Children* [1991] *Children in the Way* [1988], and the recent somewhat controversial study of family life, *Something to Celebrate* [1995] try to relate faith to living in a materialistic, fragmented society with no coherence or common core of values. The latter report summarises their aim:

*'Our theology must draw on a proper understanding of human nature and the society in which we live, as well as revelation and tradition.'* [1995: 29]

Newbigin depicts the church as faced with 'a society nourished in its deepest roots by a Christian tradition but governed in its explicit assumptions by a pagan ideology.' [1986:124] He talks of Christians as missionaries and asks '*..How can we be missionaries to this modern world, we who are ourselves part of this modern world?*' [1986:133] He argues for the importance of equipping lay people to think out the relationship of their faith to their secular work, for '*Here is where the real missionary encounter takes place.*' Newbigin's conclusion underlines my own vision:

*'The missionary encounter with our culture for which I am pleading will require the energetic fostering of a declericalised, lay theology.....we need a multitude of places where this kind of lay theology can be nourished.....only thus will the church fulfill its proper missionary role.'* [1986:142]

### THREE KEY ISSUES FOR LAY CHRISTIANS

Christians, then, have to grapple with issues of belief which challenge their own accepted faith; they also have to adapt to changing patterns of living and employment.

Firstly they face a conflict of values. Tidball describes the difference between Christian and non-Christian as not simply a matter of church-going, but a total difference of mind-set and life-principle.[1987: 82] In my view this is an increasingly difficult distinction for Christians to make. As Bliss pointed out some time ago, the values and outlook of secular society are deeply embedded in the life of the lay Christian who

*'stands in a peculiar position vis-a-vis this new culture ..a child of it committed to it by daily living, one with it in many attitudes which already lie at too deep a level of consciousness for repudiation.'* [1958: 90-91]

In consequence there is a great temptation to lead a double life, simply identifying Christian faith with church life, and making no connection between Sunday and Monday. Kraemer writing of this dilemma talks of a 'schizophrenic state of mind'. [1965:112-119] Morisey describes this as a 'domesticated private faith', where discipleship is reduced to 'little more than being a law-abiding citizen who happens to go to church Sunday by Sunday and practises personal piety'. [1997: 14].

Secondly the church appears to many outside its doors as simply a RELIGIOUS CLUB. In the face of an indifferent society there is a temptation for Christians to perpetuate this view by retreating into the security of an unchallenged and unchanging church life.

*'The problem is that the church has become to many a symbol of irrelevance ....a hobby that fits in with a lot of other things in a busy week.'* [Lowe 1995: 16]

Both Lowe and Warren call for a reorientation of thinking in the local church from complacent pastoral mode to missionary congregation in order to meet the needs of the unchurched. This in turn must challenge the church to fresh thinking about the place and exercise of lay ministry. [Lowe 1995:15; Warren 1995a): 11,27,172]

Thirdly the recognisable institutional role for clergy is disappearing. [Bunting 1993:14; Tiller 1993:96] A recent report suggests that stipendiary clergy are no longer seen as the main agent of the church's mission so much as

enablers and resource people, though it's not clear whether this is the perception of clergy, laity or the local community. [*Order in Diversity* 1993:11] At the same time the working environment and the pattern of community life are rapidly changing for many lay people.[e.g. see Warren 1995: 154] It is this situation I want to address next.

#### CHANGING EMPLOYMENT SCENE

Gibbs & Morton writing in 1964 make the point that in the past a man's place in the community was more important than his job because it gave him his status and security, whereas today 'His job is the stable thing in his life - the thing that gives him security and status' - and, one could add, for many their only community apart from family. [1964:84]

Although the employment scene in today's postmodern society today presents a very different picture to that of twenty to thirty years ago, with redundancy, early retirement, and short term contracts increasingly common, nonetheless still for many people their only identity derives from the role they play in secular employment, where their sense of worth is judged purely by their job status and the amount they earn. Moreover many lay people today are used to role definition and recognition in the field of secular employment, where they receive job specification, fixed contracts of employment, accreditation and appraisal.

But probably most significant of all for the church is the high proportion of married women in employment. In past generations there was nothing exceptional about a married woman who stayed at home and served Christ unpaid in the local church and community. Women who were active in church organisations and community outreach were the Christian counterpart of what many women were doing in the local community anyway. Now however the majority of women, married or otherwise, expect to be paid for any work they do and any contribution they make to society. It is the exception rather than the rule nowadays for a Christian lay woman to stay at home and work for Christ in the community

rather than go out to paid work, unless she becomes ordained. The same voluntary lay service exercised by an unlicensed, unordained Christian woman today may require a far greater degree of Christian commitment - particularly for younger women - than ever before. Many lay women don't feel their role in a voluntary capacity is acceptable and valuable; indeed they are likely to feel somewhat disregarded and second-rate. [See for example *Something to Celebrate* 1995: 101-2] As well as a source of income they tend to look to the world of paid employment for the companionship, recognition, affirmation, status and support which was automatically supplied by the local church and community in a previous generation when lay involvement in the local parish church was part of a wider way of life.

#### THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Cockerell describes the Church like society as being '*in the parenthesis, ....somewhere in between a known past...and the more dangerous, uncharted territory of the unknown future...*' where the Church's task is to develop a 'wilderness' or 'parenthesis' spirituality. [1989: 119] Warren describes this as 'adaptive faith', which needs to be finding new and more appropriate ways of expressing itself in our day, clothing the Gospel in a way 'which resonates with the concerns, needs and aspirations of the surrounding community'. [1995: 9, 35, 49-50, 103]

I believe this must apply not just to individual or even corporate lifestyles but to church structures as well. There is evidently a need to rethink forms of Christian ministry that relate to the changing patterns of society. The church may be in danger of losing the committed ministry of many lay people who are used to recognition and job specification in the field of secular employment, but don't find it in the church. Official recognition for lay ministry, which may not have been so crucial in a past context, may be seriously under-estimated in this postmodern context.

However before exploring the implications of these issues for lay ministry today, I think it is important to take

account of biblical and traditional patterns of ministry, as any conclusions will need to balance both.

## BIBLICAL AND TRADITIONAL PATTERNS OF MINISTRY:

### THE APOSTOLIC PATTERN

The Gospel record of Jesus teaching and training his disciples for ministry indicates a call to PRESENCE (Matt 5.13-16) and PROCLAMATION (John 20.21). The apostolic commission, commencing with the 12 and then extended to the 70 (Luke 9.12-16; 10. 1-2) continues in the early church with Paul sending Timothy and then instructing him to entrust what he had learnt to faithful men who would be able to teach others also. (I Cor 4.17 etc; cf 2 Tim 2.2)

The church's commission from Jesus was not to find some more members for the church. It was to make disciples. To know the risen Christ was to become a disciple; and discipleship constituted the call to mission. Ministry was seen as corporate, not confined to leadership. Motyer describes this as a 'companionate ideal', 'leadership without autocracy'. [1985:6] Green asserts there was no suggestion one could possibly be a Christian without at the same time being called to some ministry within the church. ALL without exception had a ministry. [1983: 90]

Paul makes it clear that all members may not have the same function, but the parts played by different believers in any church are complementary and of equal value. ALL are 'gifted' by God's Holy Spirit. Moreover each member is responsible under God to employ their gifts to the full, not to neglect or misuse them. (I Cor.12, Rom 12) He emphasises the task of spiritual leadership to teach and nurture the laity, so that THEY can play an active part in ministry. (Eph.4) [See Weber 1986:70 and Bartlett 1993:53]

It would be unwise to try to derive from the New Testament account of the early church a fixed normative pattern of ministry. Bartlett suggests the early Christians were quite willing to adopt and adapt structures of church leadership which reflected the different communities and cities in which they were established.

*'The need for the early church was not to set up*

structures but to acknowledge gifts and to allow and encourage diversely gifted people to live together without chaos, boasting or shame.' [1993: 26; see also 148,190]

'I would take Acts 6 to be a paradigm of the situation in the early church: that is to say, a need arose, and the church acted on the assumption that ...it was not a surprise to the Holy Spirit because he had already prepared gifted people 'full of faith and of the Holy Spirit'. [Motyer 1985:124] (see Acts 6, 13, 14 v23, 15)

#### LOCAL & CIRCULATING LEADERSHIP

It is evident that within a short time two different types of leadership ministry arose in the early church to meet the needs of mission and maintenance. Some were called out and empowered for a ministry of teaching, preaching, evangelising and oversight; others for a ministry of practical care and administration. (Acts 2 & 6; Acts 20.17, 28; Titus 1.5,7 ) Although there were no fixed offices, the terms presbyter, bishop and elder were variously used for the first type of ministry; the term deacon for the second, and there is no use of the term priest. [see Bartlett 1993:190] Green suggests 'there was evidently a threefold division of ministry: supervisory & circulating ministry; local & settled ministry; assistant ministry of deacons'. [See 1983:24 & 42]

Watson suggests that the New Testament writers avoided the existing variety of religious terms (priest, ruler, rabbi, master) which might denote a special and privileged class in the church, and used the terms *doulos* and *diakonos* instead to denote a ministry characterised by service. [Watson 1979:250; see also Victor 1987:6 and Greenwood 1996:91]

The variety of ministries which the early church saw as gifted by the Holy Spirit to meet the needs of the time was considerable. Schillebeeckx suggests that 80 names are given in Paul's letters of fellow workers who were either itinerant preachers, served in the local community as teachers, leaders of house communities, evangelists, prophets, deacons. [1985:55-65]

The intriguing teaching about 'widows' in I Tim 5 suggests there may have been some order or category of

Christian worker which mature Christian women undertook in the local church. Perhaps this can be linked with Titus 2.3 to give a picture of a role which carried responsibility for pastoral care and teaching of younger or newer church members.

Were ministers in the early church appointed by apostles or chosen by the local congregation, or were their gifts simply informally acknowledged? No formal procedure is indicated in the New Testament. Ministers are described more in terms of their FUNCTION than their status. All ministry is seen as a gift from Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit and authorised once the gift has been evidenced. 'Those who are called to lead in God's church must do so with a clearly recognised SPIRITUAL authority and not with one that derives purely from the OFFICE that they bear.' [Watson 1979:250; see also Green 1983:9 and Bartlett 1993:175]

#### EARLY CHURCH DEVELOPMENTS

By mid 2nd century the tripartite system of ordained ministry with power concentrated in the bishop seems to have been the norm. By the time of Origen in the 3rd century *kleros* was an established term for those who held office in the church. The term *laikos* was by then commonly used of the 'simple faithful' in contrast to the educated clergy. Fink suggests that the link between ordination to the priesthood and the institution of the Eucharist probably stems from the 4th century and 'is a midrash on the biblical witness'. [The Way Supplement 1995/83:16]

*'By the 4th century the unbiblical and tragic distinction between priest and people was widely accepted.'* [Watson 1979:245]

Bartlett and Bunting both suggest that the church in each age and place has reflected the leadership patterns of the society within which it is set and thus has interpreted the biblical models in the light of them. The forms of headship in the early church then were seen to emerge in part out of the social, religious, and ethical context of the early Christian communities. In consequence, as Warren suggests,

*'the impact of hierarchical societies has been to leave the church with the defining characteristic of its being a clerical church.'* [Warren 1995a):25; see also Bunting 1993:5,14; Bartlett 1993:11,14, 26,39, 179; Gibbs & Morton 1964:107]

Schillebeeckx's suggestion that formalisation of ministry was a normal sociological development is helpful in considering the growth of church structures after the first century.[1985:62,65] It seems then that both from a biblical and a sociological point of view there are grounds for suggesting that the mission of the church could be carried out by a flexible combination of clerical and lay ministries to meet the needs of the prevailing culture.

My experience of the church's ministry in the diocese of Singapore (see Appendix 5) sheds an interesting light on this. The very different Church structure there with a strong emphasis on accredited lay ministry provokes the question as to how far this is influenced theologically and how far culturally conditioned? Would it, I wonder, translate into the UK culture, or is it only viable where there are a few larger churches? It does at least illustrate the possibility of viable alternatives to the current pattern of clerical and lay ministry in the UK.

The example of base communities in South America [see Warren 1995a):73] and of the interesting Roman Catholic model in the diocese of Evreux, France, where a large number of rural parishes are led by lay pastors [see Tiller 1993:17] again suggests that there is scope for culturally relevant flexibility within the Church's ministry.

#### **THE CHURCH AS A BODY**

Despite the biblical picture of the church as a body with many equal but different parts (I Cor. 12) the traditional picture of the church has often been that of the vicar as a one-man band with the laity as his voluntary helpers. Clergy on the one hand the leaders, the paid professionals, the experts, academically trained; laity on the other hand seen as the followers, the volunteers, the amateurs, not theologically trained.

The Lambeth conference of 1958 pointed out that 'too

*sharp a distinction has been made between clergy and laity. All baptised persons have the priestly vocation of offering life as a living sacrifice, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. There is ministry for every member of Christ; every man or woman who is confirmed is commissioned to this ministry..'* [quoted by Webster 1969:3; see also Tiller 1983:65; All are Called 1985:5; Order in Diversity 1993:4,16; ACCM Paper 1991:3-10]

This ministry of all God's people, derives from the original meaning of laity - 'laos tou theou', the chosen people of God in the Old and New Testaments. [see Kraemer 1965:48; Pittenger 1983:xii,4] On this understanding the gifts and ministry exercised by deacon, priest or bishop must derive from those exercised in the first place by laity. It is to the LAITY that the gifts required for ministry are first given by the Holy Spirit; it is in the exercise of a LAY ministry of teaching, caring, etc. that an individual's calling to the ordained ministry is first recognised.

*'Ordination is essentially a recognition of abilities already evidenced in the life of a candidate and authorisation to exercise these gifts.'* [Harper 1988:45; see also Green 1983:38]

## ORDINATION

Clergy then are set apart laity, called to a specialised ministry which is seen as distinct in some way from any ministry exercised by the generality of believers. However, in that the tasks involved in such ministry may overlap with those undertaken by lay ministers, the nature of this calling cannot be defined simply by a job specification.

The most obvious distinction between lay and clerical is the mark - one could almost say the visible mark - of ordination. It is less clear, however, what exactly that denotes, given the varied concepts of the nature of ordination. Is it empowerment, appointment to an office or recognition of gifts? [see Fink in The Way 1995/83:16-17] Are priests sacramentally or functionally different? [see All are Called 1985:5] [For some of the arguments for and against the sacramental view see House of Bishops Report 1990:33-38; Bartlett 1993:6,53; Schillebeeckx 1985:144-5]

The emphasis in the Lima document is on ordained ministers as 'proclaimers of the Gospel, leaders of the community, teachers and pastors' and ordination as a 'recognition of the call...received from God, and affirmation of that call by the church'. [BEM 1982: 2A,5A,10,11,32] Bunting sees a development in models of ordained ministry from pre-Reformation times from priest, to knowledgeable teacher, to pastoral director. [1993: 4,10,11] Bartlett suggests the prevailing perceptions today are manager and therapist. [1993:14] Tiller points out the danger of a 'reductionist attitude...which defines the distinctive ministry of a priest as limited to a few parts of the Eucharist and perhaps giving absolution and benediction'. [1983:96] On the other hand Congar voices the equal danger of a theology of the laity being an appendix to an 'ecclesiology-clericale', laity left with the leftovers once the nature and sanctity of ordination has been established! [quoted by Kraemer in 1965:74]

#### **READERS AND NON-STIPENDIARY MINISTERS**

However the distinction between clerical and lay has become more complex in recent years. The edges first became blurred with the licensing of Readers over 100 years ago, lay people theologically trained to preach and teach alongside clergy, but still viewed by many as unpaid amateurs with a secondrate training.

The ambivalence my interviewees felt towards Readership is reflected in current writing and in developments in ministry in the last twenty years. Again my observations in Singapore (see Appendix 5) made me reflect. There the limited traditional role of Reader has not been developed in line with current UK practice; instead it has effectively been bypassed by the flowering of the new lay pastoral ministry, and appears to be dying out. Although Readership in the UK is not in decline, there is a striking parallel in the way it has been bypassed in the last twenty years, and the edges further blurred, with the advent of part-time unpaid NSM's (Non-Stipendiary Ministers) and then in some dioceses LNSM's (Local Non-Stipendiary Ministers)

particularly since the ordination of women.

Strong arguments have been forwarded for the incorporation of Readers in a diaconal role. [Tiller 1993:10] The Nottingham statement concluded that Non-Stipendiary Ministry would absorb and replace Readers. [1977:J3] Tiller recommended that Readers should be able to offer themselves for the permanent diaconate, and still felt it desirable ten years later. [1993:10; see also Headley 1991:5]

Perhaps the very blurred edges between the different ministries of Reader, Non-Stipendiary Ministry, Local Non-Stipendiary Ministry (or OLM, Ordained Local Ministry), Lay Pastoral Ministry and the diaconate are in fact deeply significant. Perhaps vocation cannot be as easily categorised as the current lay/clerical divide implies. I believe there is room for reconsideration here, particularly when it comes to the question of the diaconate.

## THE DIACONATE

Over the last forty years there has been considerable debate amongst the bishops, and a number of recommendations with regard to the permanent diaconate in the Church of England. [see White & Williams 1987 for details]

In 1961 Stibbs recommended the re-establishment of a truly separate order of deacons, drawing attention to the New Testament evidence. The diaconate was not treated as a short probationary stage prior to becoming an elder, but formed a distinct permanent order of ministers of which each local congregation had several. [1961:14; see also Green 1983:57-58] Since then a number have developed the argument for the diaconate not to be simply a probationary year, a rung on the hierarchical ladder, but a full and equal order. They believe this would signal a move away from a hierarchical concept of ministry, broadening and facilitating the concept of caring Christian ministry in the community. [see Barnett 1981; Tiller 1983; Victor 1987; White & Williams 1987]

*'...a corps of deacons in a parish could not only*

*relieve the overwhelming burden borne by the clergy today but would multiply the effective ministry of the church both among its own people and in the community around it manyfold .....probably no single step could do more to bring about expansion of lay ministry in the Church today.'* [Barnett 1981:145,186,197]

White & Williams emphasise the deacon's calling as a lifelong commitment recognised by the wider Church to facilitate the ministry of the congregation. In their view this distinguishes it from lay pastoral ministry which is only seen as accountable to the local church.[1987:12] The concept is not new. Both Tiller and Victor give examples of the diaconate as a valid ministry in other parts of the world. [Victor 1987:10 Tiller 1983:107-109] However in this country the debate over the ordination of women conducted as a two-stage process via the diaconate has reemphasised the priesthood and distracted from serious consideration of the nature of a restored diaconate. [see Harper 1988:38, 166-167]

Since very few priests in an average church today have a deacon or curate to assist them, in practice most lay people will never have experienced the ministry of this third of the three-fold ministry! The lack of an essential diaconal ministry in most parish churches is a very strong argument, it seems to me, for reorganising Reader and Non-Stipendiary Ministry into a permanent local diaconate available for all local churches.

In this I applaud Schillebeeckx's attempt to find a creative resolution to the question (writing in the context of the Roman Catholic church). He acknowledges that lay pastoral workers are '*de facto*....a fourth kind of ministry...' and suggests either the diaconate be redefined by the work of pastoral workers or that a fourth ministry be created, with laying on of hands, alongside the episcopate, presbyterate and diaconate.[1985:262,266]

#### CLERGY AND LAITY - A TEAM MINISTRY?

The concept of clergy and laity as part of a team, a partnership in the Gospel, is developed by a number of writers who see clergy as 'enablers, trainers, resource

people, managers and discerners of other people's gifts' [Order in Diversity 1993:11] whose task is to nourish, equip, help & sustain the laity for their ministry, 'the building up of the saints for their work of service'. [Green 1983:12,30,35; see also Greenwood 1996:4 and Saville 1973:10-11,15]

*'The laity are not the helpers of the clergy so that the clergy can do their job, but the clergy are the helpers of the whole people of God, so that the laity can be the Church.'* [H.R.Weber quoted by Webster 1969:3]

Nonetheless the powerful distinction between clergy and laity described by Gibbs & Morton in the 1960s is still felt by many: a church organised with God at the top, then bishops and clergy as superintendents, and laity at the bottom. The assumption is that the layman is one of the privates in God's army and clergy are the officers. [1964:9]

*'Christianity is like a train with 2 classes of passengers in it. the clergy are the first-class passengers...the professionals, and the laymen the amateurs.'* [Green 1983:30]

Dozier writing more recently from a lay perspective still sees clergy as the subjects of ministry and laity as the objects, with clergy playing the role of parent and laity the role of child.

*'In the Closed Church wisdom is dispensed by the professionals, who know, to the laity, who do not know. Clergy tell and laity listen. Wisdom flows from the top downwards...the whole structure communicates to the lay person "you do not know" and the lay person replies "Yes, I do not know"'. [1988:86,89,113]*

## LAITY

In fact, however, the active work of the Church at parochial level has always been undertaken by lay people, mostly unlicensed. It is they who have run most church organisations and activities...children's and youth work, Sunday Schools, Mothers' Union, coffee mornings, church fairs, men's groups, Bible study groups etc. Yet in practice, as Dyson comments, the laity often seem to have been theologically out of sight and out of mind:

*'The laity, who make up by far the larger part of the Church, have not by comparison (with clergy) debated their identity and purpose in anything like the same detail.'* [1985:13]

There is a danger that the term laity becomes a cover-all for a vast range of people with varying gifts, skills, academic abilities and secular commitments. Some are highly educated professionals, some are unemployed, some are commuters working in high-pressure jobs, some work in low-paid part-time jobs, some are home-based, some are retired. Yet 'the word laity is simply used to designate those who have not yet turned 'professional'. [Harper 1988:29]

Bishop Stephen Neill is quoted as saying *'If the church is ever again to penetrate this alienated world and to claim it in the name of Christ, its only resources are in its convinced and converted laymen.'* [Webster 1969:5]

Gibbs & Morton acknowledge this but make a damaging distinction between *'worldly type A Christians who have their main interests in the world outside the church buildings...and the churchy type B Christians who are a very small percentage of the church of God...who are the 'good' laity always around the church premises...'* [1964:21]

There seems to be a dichotomy between the theology that sees the laity 'out there', dispersed in the secular world, and the theology that sees the laity as the local community through which mission is to be accomplished. If discipleship is a call to both presence and proclamation, then it must limit the calling of laity to emphasise one against the other. With Weber I would query the tendency to imply that the only distinct and valued sphere for laity is the world of work. [1986:56] It is for some, but the Church also needs to value the essential contribution of those who 'live out most of their Christian calling as do most clergy in the public life of the institutional church'. [All are Called 1985:66; See also Tiller 1983:70,81]

Dozier makes the point powerfully with her refreshing illustration of an ordinary lay woman's full, varied life of Christian service in the community and her reflections on it:

*'Sometimes when people who know I don't work at a paid*

nine to five job ask me what I do, I tell them I'm an unordained minister. They don't always believe me. Maybe it's because I don't always believe myself. Ministry is a difficult business which can leave one with many self-doubts and feelings of inadequacy....Lay ministry is harder in many ways than ordained because it isn't always recognised...I am a lay minister because I am one of the people who serves.' [Nell Braxton Smith in 'Is this Ministry?' in Dozier 1988:63]

Ministry is usefully defined here as service. Whilst this may incorporate presence, and certainly requires faith and a godly character (Eph.4.1, 2 Tim 2.15, 1 Tim 3.8-10), it points to a life in which forms of service can be recognised and acknowledged.

There is a wealth of resources amongst lay people, not just amongst those who may have the academic ability for Reader selection. Many lay people are creative; are mission-minded; have pastoral and evangelistic skills.

*'I'm continually surprised at the things I have done that I've been enabled to do because that's what God wanted me to do.'* [13] *'When somebody says "oh I couldn't do that", they don't know...in a few months' time..'* [H8] *'..sometimes you're surprised by the gifts people have.'* [D4]

Warren points to the vision, creativity and commitment of lay people as a vital resource. *'Confidence placed in people will draw out latent skills, energy and commitment.'* [1995a):32, 177 See also Morisey: 1997; Cockerell:1989; Dozier:1988; Faith in the City:1985; All are Called:1985; Tiller, 1988:26]

*'All ministry should be creative...the pooling of the gifts of a body of people who present great variety in terms of age, income, background, culture, race and education, is the work of master craftsmen...'* [Harper 1988:55]

Sadly, as Dow points out, some church members have such a damaged self-image and low sense of self-worth that they need the deep affirmation of God's Spirit and great encouragement to believe they have a ministry. [1983:15] In the next chapter I aim to consider how these lay gifts may be discerned, harnessed, trained and affirmed.

## CHAPTER 3

### LAY MINISTRY AND RECOGNITION

#### VOCATION....GOD'S CALL?

There are then biblical grounds for saying that all Christians are called into discipleship and all disciples are gifted, but diversely, for the Church's corporate task of ministry and mission, based on the premise that 'ALL God's people are chosen, and ALL are offered the grace, the strength and the guidance of God's Holy Spirit'. [Gibbs & Morton 1964:16 see also Stibbs 1961:11] The question is, how will all God's people experience this?

I attended a diocesan 'Vocations Morning' (1997) at which enquirers were given the opportunity to attend workshops on the 'vocations' of ordination, Readership, and the Church Army. At the remaining workshop under the coverall title of 'Lay Ministry' it was made clear that 'there's not a lot of structure in lay ministry as the only authorised selective ministry is Reader and Church Army'. The comments made by lay people in the ensuing discussion were illuminating:

*'What's pushing me is the feeling we ought to do more, but not knowing what I should be doing'; 'I'm trying to find a role that would bring together all the things I've been doing...'; "I don't want to be ordained or a Reader, so that leaves lay ministry...'*  
*'I seem to do a shopping list of jobs in the church..'; 'I've no particular qualifications...'; 'The expression 'not worthy' comes to mind...'*

A sense of direction and vocation for lay people - even those committed enough to attend a Vocations Morning - seems elusive.

I would loudly echo Dyson's plea for the term vocation not to be limited to the ordained ministry, for in its true sense it must apply as much to the ministry of lay people, gifted by the Holy Spirit. [All are Called 1985:3; see also Pittenger 1983:70] Yet in practice how much sense of calling is there for many lay people? How many in fact FEEL gifted? How many FEEL called? My interviews support Tiller and Warren in indicating that the question of vocation may actually be as much an issue of confidence - or lack of it.

'Lack of self-confidence tends to suppress any qualities of leadership and responsibility which individuals may possess.' [Tiller 1983: 39,43; See also Warren 1989:95,125]

*'That was the last thing I'd thought of...I never saw myself as standing up in front of the church, but as I began to do it I just realised it was right.'* [13]

With Cockerell I believe it's when people feel affirmed and validated and their gifts taken seriously that their self-confidence grows and change results, releasing their deepest powers and possibilities.

*'To reduce or deny the creative in a person's life is to destroy something deeply personal within them - the imago dei.'* He quotes Seabrook *'People will always remain inconsolable when they are denied a sense of purpose; rightly so.....There is an immeasurable quantity of unfulfilled talent, locked up resources, unwanted energy and power that are only waiting for a moment of release, some energising agent to express themselves.'* [1989:21,104-127]

Nonetheless in whatever sense 'all are called', clearly only some are called into lay ministries which have official diocesan recognition. The fact that the availability of these varies from region to region, however, raises a number of questions. If 'vocation' is a discernment of God's call is he, I wonder, a regional God? Does he only call people in Portsmouth to the diaconate and those in Norfolk to LNSM ministry? If there are Christians in Chelmsford who feel drawn to the diaconate or lay pastoral ministry, or Readers who feel drawn to LNSM ministry, are they mistaken or should they move?

These discrepancies provoke a number of questions. Is vocation theological or pragmatic? Are these distinctions God given or man-made? Are decisions about recognition of lay ministry made for strategic and hierarchical reasons or for the facilitating and empowering of individual calling?

I noted in my introduction the discrepancy between the interest in lay pastoral ministry expressed to me by a number of students and the lack of request for training for this in the CCS follow-up questionnaire (see Appendix 6). It's interesting that Cross dealing with a similar question with regard to provision of adult education for retired

people questions the assumption of surveys that most consumers know what they want. In fact, she suggests, most only know what they want when they see it, because consumers cannot respond beyond their experience. [1988:147-8] Her research lends weight to my view that this discrepancy is due to my interviewees' lack of confidence in their sense of vocation, and their need for a recognised ministry to be in place for them to feel called to it.

*'There wasn't anything else after the CCS. If there had been I might have gone to something else. I think I would have looked for a teaching ministry.[8] After CCS I had no thought of going on to Reader had there been pastoral assistant I would definitely have gone for that.'* [19]

If I am right then there is a responsibility on those in authority to provide a structure which most adequately meets the gifting of lay people, and gives visible recognition to the invisible call of God WHICH IS ALREADY THERE, rather than serving the needs of a system which is already in place. Kraemer illustrates this from the experience of some churches in occupied countries during the last war. With the loss of many clergy, new talents for ministry were revealed among the laity,

*'...which had always in the ordinary routine of the Church remained buried...In considering their laity they came to recognise the fact that it had existed mainly as frozen credits ...the danger was that this would be considered as a passing emergency-phenomenon which should disappear when the Churches recovered their normal condition.'* [1965:34-5]

#### LAY RECOGNITION - 'GOD'S FROZEN CREDITS'

Since lay ministry evidently encompasses both the general gifting of all Christian disciples and the recognition of the call of some to specific ministries, two questions follow. How is the general gifting of all disciples to be marked, and how far do specific lay ministries need 'official' recognition?

A strong argument is made by some for baptism as the commissioning of the laity. [Warren 1995a):182; Greenwood 1996:13; Tiller 1983:63; Order in Diversity 1993:4; Bishop's Strategy for Ministry 1992:6]

*'The Church's ministry is that of the whole people of*

*God, and baptism confers the privilege and responsibility of taking part in that ministry.'*  
[Victor 1987:6]

However I would share Weber's question as to whether this is adequate without further special commissionings. [1986:11] Even if we acknowledge that the common practice of infant baptism in the Church of England means that most adults in fact see confirmation of baptismal vows as entry into full membership of the Church, is the concept of this as 'lay ordination' a lay or purely a clerical perception? It's interesting that none of my interviewees cited baptism or confirmation as a ground for exercising a ministry. Is this a lack of proper teaching or is there a deep human need for more specific recognition of gifts?

Warren puts forward the interesting metaphor of an orchestra to illustrate his concept of leadership where ordained clergy act as conductor rather than director, facilitators geared to releasing and harmonising the gifts of others, 'a shift from soloist to team-player role'. [1995a):177] But orchestra members need to know what instrument they're playing and be trained to play it, or the church could end up with a cacophany!!

Various approaches to recognition of laity have been advocated in recent writings. The *Faith in the City* report looked for the development of local leadership in disadvantaged areas.[1985] Green advocates the bishop setting apart with prayer those in the local congregation with the charism of leadership. [1983:93] Greenwood argues for recognition of team leadership in the local congregation, though not of individual ministry. [1996:18 - 29] Walker argues for lay ministers with a pastoral role receiving the same training and recognition as Readers and forming a team with clergy and wardens.[1978:21] This is certainly progress from the clergy 'bottleneck' of the 'Church in inherited mode'. (see Watson 1979:245; Tiller 1983:116] However there is a danger that a leadership model on its own may simply clericalise a few lay leaders or create a 'quasi-ordained ministry, leaving the normal layperson with little sense of Christian identity and

purpose'. [Dyson in All are called 1985:13; Tiller 1983:27]

*'There is a danger that lay ministry will be seen merely as a substitute for the existing pattern of clergy-centred ministry, and as a means of saving money. If this happens the incumbent's role will simply be shared among a number of willing people and will be marginal for everyone....the emergence of lay ministry should be an opportunity to think through what kind of church and mission would grow from a Christian community which includes both laity and clergy working together..'* [Diocese of Sheffield 1997]

In the light of the views of many that I interviewed there seems to me a strong case for recognition of the ministry of a much wider range of lay Christian people. How refreshing to find one diocese advocating this!

*'It is hoped that in inviting people to join in the provision of Local Ministry, PCC's will follow the example of Jesus and make improbable choices.'* [Diocese of Derby 1998:10.6]

Several interviewees expressed a desire for the clarity of role and 'job specification' which they hoped not only 'official' but local recognition might bring. Skilton points out in his work on leadership teams that for volunteers, even more than paid staff, boundaries, clear definitions and fixed limits to the task are likely to create higher morale.[1999:23]

*'I think recognition is important in the form of some commissioning service for people starting out.'* [E5] *'(pastoral work) I'd see it as a job.. it's a business..there'd have to be commitment on both sides..you need backup and resources..'* [H8]

The promotion by the diocese of Derby of an Annual Ministry Sunday reaffirming the gifts of lay people in local churches is a practical approach to this need, which Dow also commends, possibly in a renewal of baptism vows. [1983:16] Tiller recommends a corporate title of 'eldership' in the local church composed individually of priests, deacons and lay pastors and also suggests a Ministry Roll in each church. A lay ministry serving a whole diocese should be included in a diaconate, with local ministries being recognised at parochial level. [1983:63,76,119] It's this model that seems to me to come closest to the perceptions of the lay people I interviewed.

## 'OFFICIAL' DIOCESAN OR NATIONAL RECOGNITION

It's interesting that the diocese of Sheffield training scheme for lay evangelists came about because someone who had undertaken a major evangelistic initiative in her parish asked for a formal training scheme - because of the ambiguities of role and authority which made her realise authorisation was necessary. In other words a case was made for 'official' lay recognition following evidence of the gift. [Diocese of Sheffield 1997]

Bartlett suggests that the laying on of hands by elders in I Tim 4.14 *'represents a legitimising recognition by church leaders that the gift given is indeed a gift from God. It implies at least recognition if not empowerment.'* [1993:175]

Whilst most of my interviewees saw affirmation of their gifts or ministry by clergy or the leadership team as informal recognition, they looked to the diocese or the Church of England nationally for what they considered to be 'official' recognition, especially where pastoral, teaching or evangelistic gifts have already been demonstrated. This carried the weight of higher authority which moved it beyond the status of 'just helping the vicar out'. They felt it would give them an acknowledged role; clarify expectations and responsibilities; confer authority to carry out a given task; and give support, training and fellowship in their ministry.

This has been discussed in a number of reports. [e.g. Tiller 1983; All are called 1985; Order in Diversity 1993] However debate still continues, particularly with regard to Lay Pastoral Ministry.

## LAY PASTORAL MINISTRY

An ABM enquiry in 1992 indicated that 19 dioceses had a scheme for formally recognised lay ministry (see also Appendix 7), commenting

*'Such ministries abound in a wide and exciting variety ...yet other dioceses have chosen not to follow this route of authorising people in specific ministries, seeing it as an unacceptable fragmentation of the people of God.'* [ABM Order in Diversity 1993: 1.15]

Amazingly, although it quoted the Portsmouth Report indicating 'much enthusiasm and expectancy expressed in a large number of dioceses..' and acknowledged that the result is a better trained, better equipped, abler laity who feel their gifts are being used, it concluded that

*'there is a strongly felt resistance to any form of central validation or accreditation of formal lay ministries. The feeling against another layer of national accreditation is strong, despite the recognition that it is a growing area of ministry.'*  
[ABM Order in Diversity 1993: 3.46-48]

Further work on the possibility of national recognition was done by the Formal Lay Ministry Project which submitted a report to ABM and the House of Bishops in 1997 recommending '*As in many dioceses more and more people attend courses and are authorised to exercise a particular ministry there is a strong argument for some consistency of approach and application across dioceses.*' [1997:2] Yet again this was not supported because of reservations about the principle of Formal Lay Ministry.

Equally in the Chelmsford diocese the Bishop's Strategy for Ministry [1992], whilst acknowledging the role of lay people in a pastoral ministry, questioned whether diocesan accreditation would help or hinder, and in the end decided against. Yet the evidence of lay people themselves is that their ministry would be affirmed and empowered by official recognition.

*'If I said to anybody "I'm a vicar" they'd know what I meant, but running a youth group or having responsibility for pastoral care hasn't got that recognition....There are so many people in the church who've got wonderful gifts for pastoral care who don't really get recognised because there's not a job description...and I think we live in a society where that sort of recognition is highly valued.'* [D4]

In a number of dioceses (see e.g. Rochester, Sheffield, Wakefield) Readers, Lay Pastors and Lay Evangelists after diocesan training are recognised as three equal strands of an accredited lay ministry. The only differentiation is caused by a reluctance at national level to accord the same 'official' recognition to Lay Pastors and Evangelists as to Readers. So is the objection to another 'layer' of ministry

a purely clerical one, made from a position of power, regardless of lay perceptions and expectations? The arguments put forward are surprisingly weak and unsubstantiated, perpetuating a hierarchical view of a pyramid with senior clergy at the apex, then lesser clergy, Readers, churchwardens and finally the anonymous rest at the bottom of the pile.

Considering the experience of the early church in Acts 6, presumably the apostles weren't unduly concerned with 'Unacceptable fragmentation of the people of God' when they appointed 'seven men'. Their prime concern was to share the growing workload more effectively, acknowledging that they couldn't do it all themselves! Neither presumably did such a concern deter the establishment of Reader and Non-Stipendiary Ministries on a national basis.

Fifteen years ago Tiller pointed to the danger of '*lay participation in ministry becoming something of a desperate measure prompted by a diminishing supply of clergy*'. [1983:65; see also Kraemer 1965:160,169] Are decisions about lay recognition still to be made on the basis of what can safely be allowed by the hierarchy *in extremis*, or are they to be made in response to the expressed need of lay people for their ministry to be acknowledged and empowered?

Ulloa argues that despite attempts to increase lay participation, the central role of the ordained priest as organiser, supervisor, and permitter of such activities means that his control is still paramount. [95:5; see also Harper 1988:36-40] Issues of function, status & power seem to be at stake, both at the local level and at diocesan or national level. There are echoes here of Freire's argument that the oppressed so often hear they are good for nothing that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitness. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

*'The peasant feels inferior to the boss because the boss seems to be the only one who knows things and is able to run things.'* [quoted by Jarvis 1987:74]

*'My confidence is at zero now...my vocations adviser was very discouraging..he kept on about the academic side the whole time...I felt totally knocked about'*  
[2]

## LAY EDUCATION

It seems that this sense of inferiority amongst lay people is partly due to their perceived position in a hierarchical structure but also partly due to their felt ignorance. Dow makes the point that the very training and professional competence of the ordained ministry discourages lay people. [1983:16] This is borne out by many of my interviewees who assumed that they were theologically incompetent. *'I think because of the academic side I don't have any confidence in myself.'* [2] Perhaps this is at least partly due to the fact that many adults coming to faith today have far less background knowledge of the Christian faith than would have been the case thirty years ago.

I found an interesting comparison here with the diocese of Singapore (see Appendix 5) where it was assumed that all adult converts since they came from a different faith background would need a course of Christian education. The confidence these Christians had in their faith was striking, and large numbers went on to cell group leadership and Lay Pastoral Ministry. The structured education programme of this diocese appeared to reap huge benefits in terms of lay participation in the Church's ministry.

Another factor may be the emphasis on lifelong learning and accreditation experienced by many lay people in secular employment [see eg Cross 1988:48; Craig 1994:1-2, 112-115], which may leave them feeling disabled and unresourced by contrast in church life. Dow sees the need for a process of lay development which starts with encouragement then leads to discovery, training, acceptance and recognition in fruitful service. [1983:16 see also Tiller 1983:82] This corresponds closely with the stages that were identified by the majority of my interviewees who felt their desire for education was the starting point. From this sprung a growing sense of call and desire to serve, which then prompted a need for training and the consequent desire for affirmation and recognition.

This implies a spiral model where faith seeks

understanding and understanding increases faith. [see Tomorrow is Another Country 1996: e.g.38-39] The key appears to be the individual's felt need for education, which seems to support Jarvis view that the need to learn should precede the development of self in Maslow's hierarchy of needs.[1987: 46-7].

Interestingly Hull sees it as the adult educator's responsibility to make learning more attractive than stagnation in the present because growth only takes place when the next step forward is intrinsically more satisfying. [1991:169] Should this then be the responsibility of clergy as well?

The strong value placed by my interviewees on education as confidence-building has considerable support, as I have already indicated. Jarvis' theory also lends weight to this view. He suggests that since most adult learning is self-directed and a striving for meaning, adults suffer a debilitating loss of self-confidence when they feel unable to learn new knowledge from experience. Presumably this would be true of Christians who are not enabled to develop an adult understanding of their faith lived in the world today. Jarvis also points to the significance of others' approval which facilitates successful learning and generates a positive self-image; whereas a poor self-image may inhibit the realisation of full potential. [1987:58-9, 63, 77,84]

This is illustrated by the experience of some students who found no outlet or encouragement for their sense of vocation following CCS. In contrast those who felt valued and empowered in their local church had developed a ministry which surprised themselves. Evidence indeed for Kraemer's most compelling argument that if lay people are kept in a state of spiritual immaturity, seeing themselves as 'ignorant' with clergy as the 'knowers', then they cannot fulfil their mission in the world.

*'(we need to) regain an adult Christianity to enable the laity to become the spearhead of the church and not its hesitant rearguard.'* [1965: 65,118]

## LAY TRAINING

It's interesting that a clear distinction was made by my interviewees between education and training, seeing the latter as one of the benefits of 'official' recognition.

*'The potential benefit of diocesan recognition would be access to relevant training and a wider range of resources..'[E5]*

Tiller made the same distinction over 15 years ago when he outlined his aim to encourage the development of a fully shared ministry. It was to be firstly by means of an educational exercise to make all baptised members of the Church of England aware of their calling from God; and secondly by providing the resources and training to enable them to use their gifts to fulfil their calling. [1983:49] Sadly the finance to resource this properly has not been forthcoming.

*'...direct investment in laity education and laity development is still grossly inadequate. Resources must be provided to enable lay people to continue their Christian nurture...church funding for all this is often pitiful compared with the budgets for clerical education.'* [Dyson in All Are Called 1985:5-8; See also Gibbs & Morton 1964:179; Green 1983:99,105; Watkins in The Way Supplement 1995/83: 87-88]

Theoretically the appalling imbalance of finance spent on lay and clerical education could be justified by a system where local lay training was in the hands of clergy. Bliss argues that this assumption of a handed-down theology has never worked in practice. [1958:90] Certainly in the experience of the CCS students I interviewed, little time is devoted directly to training by their clergy. This could be because some don't have the skills or simply don't see the need. Primarily, I suspect, it is because most do not have the time. Ironically this will be increasingly the case with the reducing numbers of lay people available today to share in parochial ministry. We come full circle!

## CONCLUSION

As I have attempted to show, New Testament evidence and contemporary writers point to the importance of lay ministry, working in partnership with clergy to further the witness and mission of the Church. The testimony of my interviewees lends weight to this. However while some writers emphasise the place for lay ministry and witness as being 'out there in the world'; others call on lay people to play their part in furthering the mission of the local church in the community. One thing is certain, all God's people (*laos*) are part of the ministry of the Church, although they may be variously gifted.

I have endeavoured to show the significance of cultural relevance in understanding the nature of lay ministry today by contrasting it with a different culture in Singapore and striking changes in our own society over recent decades. The observation [Schillebeeckx & Bartlett] that ministry in the New Testament and early church was fluid and developed to meet needs and to harness gifts in a way that was culturally relevant yet true to its theology seems to me a significant base from which to assess the most appropriate resourcing of lay ministry today. We have to consider the 'complex interplay of biblical precedent, church tradition and social context' and learn 'how to adapt the ancient visions to our own needs'. [Bartlett 1993:5,18]

Coupled with this we have to bear in mind striking changes in the structure of our society and its impact on church life. I suggest that up until thirty years ago much of the day-to-day work in the local church both of mission and maintenance was undertaken by a workforce of married women who were not in paid employment. There was no 'order' in the church by which this was recognised, since it was the counterpart of the active but unrecognised role of women in the local community. In other words it was culturally relevant. That resource is rapidly disappearing and becoming culturally out-of-step with a society in which married women expect to find their meaning and identity in

paid employment with identifiable career prospects.

What pattern of lay ministry then will be true today to the biblical concept of discipleship and relevant to a society which finds its identity in recognised roles and clear job specification? How can lay people be best equipped for the missionary task of the church in a postmodern society? It is vitally important that any rethinking is undertaken first and foremost in order to resource lay people in the most effective way, not as a knee-jerk reaction to dwindling finances and shortage of stipendiary clergy.

My research has focused on the perceptions of lay people themselves with regard to the nature and value of their ministry. Their testimony leaves little doubt that they are most likely to value their ministry when they feel valued by clergy - either through the affirmation of their vicar, or the more formal recognition of selection for an 'official' role. 'Official' recognition is understood to refer to a ministry or role which has diocesan or national accreditation, structure and training. Informal affirmation in the local situation was certainly valued by my interviewees, though not surprisingly there was frustration when potential for ministry was not acknowledged and gifts not used by clergy.

Where interviewees felt a sense of call to a specific ministry of preaching, evangelism, teaching or pastoral care, 'official' recognition was seen as valuable if not essential. It gives support and focus; a recognisable structure and role; and an authority which others are more likely to recognise and acknowledge, both within and outside the Church. There was also in some a sense of calling to forms of 'official' ministry which were not available to them. Is frustration and discouragement in fact undirected vocation? If that is the case, what a terrible waste of a precious resource!

At the same time there is strong testimony to the place of education in stimulating individual confidence in lay ministry, and leading to a sense of vocation. So much so that it seems reasonable to suggest that vocation may be as

much to do with confidence and affirmation or recognition as with specific gifting. Can vocation be 'taught not caught'? If the basic premise is accepted that 'All are Called' to discipleship, then Tiller's two-point aim of providing education for all baptised/confirmed church members, and then the resources and training to enable them to use their God-given gifts to fulfil their calling should still be the Church's priority.

I hope to have demonstrated that recognition and affirmation coupled with education & training DO enable and empower a more fruitful ministry of lay people in the local church. In this case it must be important to find ways to harness and mobilise that resource by providing opportunities for appropriate and relevant recognition, both informally at local level and more formally or 'officially' at diocesan and national level.

As a result of my research I would make three recommendations:

1] *A basic year's course of Christian education in the local church for ALL church members following confirmation, concluding with a commissioning service and the opportunity for job specification in agreement with the local church. The practice of an Annual Ministry Sunday, Ministry Roll, reaffirmation of baptism vows etc. in the local church would also be commendable. This would meet the expressed need of interviewees for foundational education, encouragement to undertake ministry and job specification.*

2] *A further course of Christian education at diocesan level, after which training for 'officially' recognised ministries would be available, including Lay Pastoral Ministry which should have national accreditation. This would open up a choice of accredited ministries and offer the authorisation and training which interviewees valued.*

3] *A revived permanent diaconate, including paid and unpaid, full and part-time workers, with the possibility of incorporating the roles of NSM's and Readers- or the essence of their ministry. This would address the current*

*confused situation and widen the opportunities for lay people seeking authorised ministries of service.*

The laity are the key to the church's work in furthering the Gospel. In a changing world they need job specification, ongoing support and fellowship in the tasks they undertake, with wider diocesan accreditation of a diverse lay ministry. Their encouragement, education, mobilisation, training, and commissioning should be an urgent priority in the local church and on the agenda of the wider Church. It merits far more of the Church's resources than it currently receives.

*'....The strategic way to manage the human resources of the church is to equip and empower all God's people for mission in the world.'* [Pettifer on ABM Ministry Paper 18, 1998 in CEN 29.1.99] The rhetoric is there. Is the will to tackle the problems and power structures?

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DIOCESAN RESOURCE MATERIAL

Diocese of Derby Council for Ministry, 'A Better Way' 1998

Diocese of Exeter Adult Training Committee, Adult Training in Exeter Diocese 1997

Diocese of Rochester, Integrated Training Scheme, The Faith & Ministry Course & The Developing Ministries Programme (undated)

Diocese of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich, Information on Training Opportunities, Readers and Lay Elders, 1997

Diocese of Sheffield, The Pastoral Workers' and Readers' Course, 1997, Lay Parish Evangelists' Course, 1998

Diocese of Southwark, Southwark Pastoral Auxiliaries Scheme, 1997

Diocese of Southwell, 'Exploring your Ministry' 1998

Diocese of Truro, Lay Training Course 1997

Diocese of Wakefield, Information on Readers' Training, Bishop's Certificate in Pastoral Ministry, 'Exploring Christian Faith Today' & 'Sharing Ministry in the Parish', 1997

Diocese of Winchester, 'Into a New Millennium - Our response to Christ's Call' Consultation Draft, 1997

Diocese of Worcester, 'Discovering Christianity Together', Bishop's Certificate Course, 1991

Diocese of York, Lay Pastoral Assistant Training, (undated)

.....  
Diocese of Singapore, 1997, Lay Training Modules & Discipleship Programme

OTHER RESOURCE MATERIAL

Church of England Advisory Board of Ministry, Unpublished Report B(97)17, 1997, Formal Lay Ministry Project

Andrew Wigram 1995 Private report from sabbatical, made available in Chelmsford diocese, 'Teamwork in Parishes'

Chelmsford Diocesan Course in Christian Studies, Survey of Past Students, 1997 (see Appendix 6)

Chelmsford Diocesan Vocations Morning, Notes from day attended 27.9.97

Theological Reflection with students on a post-CCS course, notes from discussion, March 1996 (Appendix to submission for module THM 024: Theology of Adult Education)

## APPENDICES

- 1) Research Questionnaire for M.A. Topic
- 2) Outline: Lay education & training in Chelmsford Diocese
- 3) Outline: Chelmsford Diocesan Course in Christian studies
- 4) Outline: 2.7 Course
- 5) Lay Ministry in the Diocese of Singapore
- 6) Survey of past CCS students - Spring 1997
- 7) Replies: questionnaire on Diocesan training schemes 1998
- 8) List of Interviewees: CCS Students & members of St. Paul's Church, Braintree

### APPENDIX 1)

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE FOR M.A. TOPIC

Suggested areas for discussion at informal interview:

\* Do you have any particular role or area of service in your local church?

How do you view your Christian ministry at present?

How would you like to see it develop?

Would you like any (other) ministry in your local church?

\* Have you received any training in your local church?

Have you undertaken any training at diocesan level?

Would you value any further training now?

If so, what and why?

\* Would you value some authorisation of any ministry you have at present - either officially or more informally?

At parish level?

At diocesan level?

\* Would you consider undertaking some new form of service or ministry in your local church if it carried some official authorisation?

At parish level?

At diocesan level?

### APPENDIX 2)

#### LAY EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN CHELMSFORD DIOCESE (1999)

Currently the CCS course is provided at a number of centres throughout the diocese. Occasional short courses are run by the diocese in pastoral care, not leading to any diocesan accreditation. A voluntary scheme to develop local church leadership (Ministry As Partnership) is being made available in the diocese for churches which wish to participate. A scheme of training for MAP is about to be implemented.

Reader training is based on the CCS course followed by a further 20 month training before licensing, and 9 months afterwards.

Currently there are no schemes for accredited lay pastoral workers or evangelists, and there is no LNSM (OLM) scheme.

All this is under review.

### APPENDIX 3)

#### **DIOCESE OF CHELMSFORD: COURSE IN CHRISTIAN STUDIES**

Two year course of lay adult education, involving written homework and projects, at the end of which a certificate is awarded. For those proceeding to Reader training, this is the foundation course. There are twelve units of five weeks each:

*Introduction to theology*  
*Old Testament (part I)*  
*New Testament (Gospels and Acts)*  
*Church History (Early Church)*  
*Baptism and Discipleship*  
*Christian Ethics*  
*Spirituality*  
*Prophecy (Old Testament and now)*  
*Paul the apostle and Mission today*  
*Church History (Reformation era)*  
*Choice of modules*  
*Eucharist and Society*

### APPENDIX 4)

#### **THE 2.7 DISCIPLESHIP COURSE**

Two year course in Christian discipleship, involving homework with emphasis on personal preparation rather than academic study. Available nationally to be undertaken in small groups in the local church. There are six units of ten weeks each: .

*Growing in Christ (3 units) covering:*  
*Devotional life, Prayer, Bible study, Bible interpretation,*  
*Fellowship*

*Living for Christ (3 units) covering:*  
*Worshipping disciples; Witnessing disciples; Working*  
*disciples*

## APPENDIX 5)

### LAY MINISTRY IN THE DIOCESE OF SINGAPORE

A visit to Singapore in May 98 gave me the opportunity to study a very different Anglican church structure, where the majority of those engaged in full or part-time ministry are not ordained. There are 25 large churches in the diocese with 65 clergy and over 100 full-time paid pastoral workers. In addition there are also full-time voluntary workers, part-time paid workers and pastoral assistants, paid and unpaid. One large church has a ratio of 3 ordained staff with 50 pastoral staff to 4000 members. At this rate clergy become like mini-bishops or at least archdeacon/rural dean to the number of staff they oversee, except that the staff are not ordained. The current clergy profile therefore requires a priest capable of leading a multi-staff team.

Pastoral staff are licensed by the bishop to exercise ministry in their own parish. Diocesan recognition means their status would continue if they moved to another church, though in practice most remain in their own church. They are listed as part of the recognised staff in the church's annual report to synod. Pastoral or parish workers would normally have completed a diocesan diploma in ministry, shown evidence of a proven ministry, mature spiritual character and calling; an assistant's licence could be granted at the outset provided training is being undertaken. The diocesan licence provides recognition and endorsement of ministry as well as a level of 'quality control'

A comprehensive diocesan scheme of modular lay Christian education is provided for all baptised/confirmed adults, and plays a significant role in the formation of lay people.

There seem to be few lay Readers, and their tasks are mainly limited to administration of the chalice and reading set services, with a very few involved in preaching.

A secular model of barefoot doctors in China was the source of inspiration for the bishop of Singapore in developing the scheme for lay pastors in the 1970's. In view of a dearth of doctors to meet the vast medical needs in China, a scheme was set up to identify the 10 most common illnesses and to train 'lay' (non-medical) people to recognise and treat them in their locality. This secular model led to radical reflection on the process of lay training in a diocese with limited clergy resources.

## APPENDIX 6)

### CHELMSFORD DIOCESE - COURSE IN CHRISTIAN STUDIES SURVEY OF SAMPLE OF PAST STUDENTS- SPRING 1997

Students who completed the CCS in three different years were asked to complete the survey. Numbers of questionnaires sent:

1990 ..33	7 replies	22% response
1993 ..31	12 replies	40% response
1996 ..100	22 replies	22% response

Statistics can of course be interpreted in many ways; one can never be sure of avoiding bias! I can only comment on one or two points that have struck me from this survey.

1) Two comments from 1990 and 1993 seem to sum up the general feeling: *'Studying on the CCS opens up for people the whole area of Christian education and shows them the possibilities. It affirms people in their faith, and challenges it, often leading to deeper commitment (occasionally the challenge is too great and they give up)'* *'It has been a complete revelation. I have learnt more about my faith and myself than in the 25 years since first becoming a Christian'*

2) There is an enthusiasm for the course in terms of general learning and specifically for the Biblical units, spirituality unit and early church history. Students particularly appreciate the live aspect of studying and discussing in small groups; and a number express appreciation of being enabled to undertake the discipline of study again or for the first time.

3) There is considerable interest in further study after the CCS as separate from further training. As one would expect, a smaller proportion of these are looking for more academic study, but the majority of requests are for further short non-examined courses.

4) A concern was expressed about lack of 'follow-on' provided by the diocese, summed up by these comments: *'I felt very much a pull to pastoral work but was not sure where to begin'* *'Once the course was over, the only way forward was as a Reader. There needs to be more follow-up in the form of short courses for those not going on to the Readers' course...I was left in limbo!'*

5) However a whole range of unaccredited ministries have been undertaken by students in their own churches since CCS, such as church warden, deanery Synod rep, youth leader, work with children's holiday clubs, pastoral leader, hospice chaplain, homegroup leader or leading a Lent or Alpha group. A small proportion from each year have trained as Readers and one or two for ordination.

6) Vocational: I am struck by the lack of request for lay pastoral training, since my own impression from students each year is that there is a continual demand for this. I wonder if this is due to the fact that students only think

in terms of what IS available and not in terms of what is NOT available? In other words, would they only express interest in such a scheme when it actually exists? It's difficult to draw conclusions either way from lack of evidence! Sheila Lloyd 28.4.97

APPENDIX 7)

REPLIES TO QUESTIONNAIRE ON DIOCESAN TRAINING SCHEMES 1998  
Questionnaires were sent to 44 dioceses; 24 replied.

TRAINING & EDUCATION:

All responding dioceses provided Reader training. Of other forms of training and education the following were provided in the 24 responding dioceses :

<i>Course of Christian education</i>	18	
<i>Pastoral assistant -accredited</i>	7	(+ diaconate scheme)
"                    -non-accredited	7	"
<i>Lay evangelist</i>	6	"

2 or 3 other diocesan schemes were under review.

RECOGNITION & LICENSING

Apart from Reader licensing in all dioceses, the following were provided in the 24 responding dioceses:

<i>Annual diocesan licensing</i>	8	
<i>Occasional " "</i>	2	
<i>Parish or deanery licensing</i>	7	+ 3 teams

APPENDIX 8)

CASE STUDY INTERVIEWS

Former Students on the Chelmsford Diocesan Course in  
Christian Studies

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.5.98

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Local Church Members: St. Paul's Church, Braintree

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A1  
B2  
C3  
D4  
E5  
F6  
G7  
H8

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i] Newer Church members: Jenny, Cathy, Wendy  
ii] More established Church members: Miranda, Brenda,  
Amanda & Ann

Diocese of Singapore

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Interviews with

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