

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL  
SCIENCES

THE PRIEST IN SECULAR WORK:  
PARTICIPATING IN THE *MISSIO DEI*

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This research programme was carried out in collaboration  
with the Cambridge Theological Federation

A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements of  
Anglia Ruskin University for the degree of  
Professional Doctorate

Submitted: March 2019

## Acknowledgements

With thanks to:

All the priests in secular work who have taken part: the group of co-researchers in the co-operative research stage of this research, the interviewees, and all who participated in the online survey.

Rev'd Dr Andrew Stobart, Rev'd Dr Michael Fass, Rev'd Dr Ian McIntosh and especially Dr Zoë Bennett for all that they have given me through their supervision of my work.

Rev'd Dr Lynda Taylor for critical reading and help through a sticky patch.

Rev'd Dr Ruth Goatley for support throughout.

Colleagues on the DProf programme in the Cambridge Federation for being my academic community in which I could develop as a theologian.

Colleagues (lay and ordained) and congregations in the churches in which I have served while conducting this research for their interest and prayers.

The Women's Continuing Ministerial Education Trust of the Church of England for financial support.

My husband, Andrew, who in addition to proof-reading, has always been my greatest support.

Without my parents' belief in me, and their love, none of this would have been possible, and so all that this represents is dedicated to their memory.

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

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PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE

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The purpose of this thesis is to describe and evaluate the unique vocation and self-understanding of the priest in secular work in the Church of England. At present, it is not well understood as a particular form of priestly ministry which can contribute to theology and models of priesthood in the Church.

Phenomenological research was undertaken with 28 priests in secular work, including myself, through a co-operative inquiry group, and through in-depth interviews. The ensuing data was interrogated against a background of appropriate theological literature.

The data was analysed using the double hermeneutic of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, enabling me to describe certain key features, such as our sense of identity as priests, and our commitment to our secular work. This is exemplified through discussion of four key questions:

- What does it mean to be a priest in the secular?
- Does it make any difference to how we do our jobs?
- How does this proclaim Christ to the world?
- What is the role of the priest in secular work in the life of the church?

The contribution to knowledge is the assessment of the priest in secular work as a particular vocation through which God works in the secular world. The priest in secular work contributes to the *missio Dei* through their witness to God's presence and to God's affirmation of that world, and through their sacramental embodiment of that presence and affirmation.

Key words: priest, secular work, *missio Dei*, sacramental presence

Word length: 75,835

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# 1 Introduction and Context

The context for this research is the ordained ministry of the Church of England (C of E), which has been the established church in England since 1689. In the early 16th century under Henry VIII, the C of E, initially for political reasons as much as any, separated from the Roman Catholic Church, subsequently becoming part of the European-wide Reformation. It now considers itself to be a reformed church, but still part of the universal catholic church (Archbishops' Council, 2017a), because it claims historical continuity with the first churches of apostolic times, first through bishops ordained by the apostles, and then through bishops ordaining their peers and successors, and under them, priests and deacons (cf. Archbishops' Council, 2007a, pp. 4-5).

## Glossary

C of E	Church of England
CIG	Co-operative inquiry group
FTS	Full-time stipendiary (priest)
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
MSE	Minister in secular employment
M/PSE	Minister/priest in secular employment
NSM	Non-stipendiary minister/ministry
PSE	Priest in secular employment
PSW	Priest in secular work
SSM	Self-supporting minister/ministry

In this research, I seek to understand and articulate a distinctive form of priesthood, in which the priestly vocation is contextualised through both parish/church ministry and secular work. The term generally used in the C of E for this type of ministry is minister in secular employment (MSE). A major focus of this thesis is the way in which I realised that this does not do justice to the vocation of those called to this ministry, exemplified by my use of first MSE, then M/PSE (minister *or* priest in secular employment), then PSE (*priest* in secular employment) and finally PSW (priest in secular *work*). My journey through these acronyms encapsulates the development of my conceptual thinking, and so is one way in which this thesis could be summarised. That journey is described in greater detail in section 1.3, and also informs the choice of theological literature discussed in chapter 6 and the direction in which I took the interpretation of the data in chapters 7 to 10.

Participants in this research include some who have been in full-time ministry at some point, but have also spent part of their working life outside the church, while continuing a commitment to parish-based ministry, and also some who have always been in secular work, both before and after ordination. Some of the participants are now retired from paid employment, but still maintain a commitment to some form of secular work, either unpaid or freelance. Some of the participants were clear from the outset that their priestly vocation would include secular work; for others, myself

included, it was more a realisation over time that this was the vocation to which we were called, rather than a clear decision from the start.

This research originated one day in September 2009, three months after my ordination as deacon, when, browsing in a library which houses works from the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on work and workplace ministry, I found the report *Non-Stipendiary Ministry in the Church of England in the 1970s* (Hodge, 1983). In my memory, I read the phrase ‘holding the tension’, describing non-stipendiary ministers’ (NSMs’) experience: this resonated deeply with me. Interestingly, when I later read the whole report, I could not find that phrase anywhere – yet it was key to this research.

In the months that followed, I found myself asking ‘What am I for?’ with a sense of real anguish. Like many of those earlier NSMs, I would have liked to reduce the tension by going into ministry full-time, but that was not possible while I still wanted paid employment, not to mention regular pension contributions. Later, when I took early retirement from my secular employment, I found that although I could then have made ministry a full-time occupation, my secular work would keep on intruding itself – not least because I still found it enjoyable and fulfilling. Eventually I concluded that my vocation is to hold the tension, because I believe that my secular work is as important to God as my contribution to parish ministry. Exploring what that means is the purpose of this research.

Although being ordained focused the tension between ministry in the church and secular work in a very specific way for me, this tension is not restricted to ordained clergy. In her research, Garfield (2011) found that lay people also struggled with it, writing of one of her participants that her “belief that Christian identity can only be connected with caring, goodness, compassion and love results in a situation where parts of her workplace experience cannot be included within the Christian framework” (Garfield, 2011, pp. 148-149). Garfield’s thesis described the way in which lay Christians acknowledged (or not) their faith commitment and community in their secular workplaces. She found that, consciously or not, many of her participants separated their faith and work identities, while feeling that the church had failed in giving them tools with which to integrate them. She concluded that a focus on the ministry of the ordained clergy has not helped churches in enabling believers in their discipleship in the world, and particularly in their workplaces.

I am convinced that it is a mistake for churches to view such enabling as peripheral: to do so is to misunderstand something important about God and about how we serve God. As Pickard (2009, p. 445) put it: because God is a worker “[t]he baptised are

called, in their life, vocation and work, to follow the creative and reconciling work of God and offer their gifts and talents accordingly". God's work in the world, the *missio Dei*, the work of creation and redemption, is work for which the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to and for God's people: one way in which the church can be part of this work is through understanding, valuing and encouraging the specific vocation of those whom the C of E labels MSEs, and whom I conceptualise as PSWs (priests in secular work).

## 1.1 How did we get here? A brief history

The official preservation of the Christian faith and the formal continuity of the church have always been in danger of becoming the ultimate concern in the church at the expense of the continuing experience of this faith in different times and cultural circumstances. (Jeanrond, 1991, p. 172).

This quotation forms a useful backdrop to an account of how we arrived at the current position, since "the reluctance to encourage variation from the parochial model of ministry is a recurring feature in this history" (Hodge, 1983, p. 21, referring to the history of the non-stipendiary model of ministry).

According to the New Testament, Paul was at least partly a self-supporting apostle, generally described as a tent-maker (Acts 18.3). However, by the time that the C of E came into being in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a person in holy orders was only permitted:

... to be gainfully employed in a school, as a publisher, as a manager of a life assurance society, or in farming up to 80 acres, [and was] specifically prohibited ... from engaging in any trade or dealing for gain in any goods, wares or merchandise. (Hodge, 1983, p. 9, as given in *The Pluralities Act* of 1838, which was based on a Statute of 1529)

Bishops were instructed not to allow their clergy to engage in any other kind of work, with the effect that the only realistic options for the vast majority of ordained men<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The ordination of women in the Anglican communion dates from the 1970s, although the first woman to be ordained priest was Florence Li Tim-Oi on 25 January 1944, during the crisis caused by the Japanese invasion of Hong Kong. After the war, she resigned her licence, while remaining in priestly orders, eg. <https://www.anglican.ca/faith/worship/resources/li-tim-oi/>, accessed 19 January 2019. Ordination of women as priests in the C of E dates from 1994, eg. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/send-down-your-holy-spirit-upon-your-servant-angela-history-is-made-as-the-church-of-england-ordains-1428835.html>, accessed 19 January 2019.

were to be a farmer, schoolmaster or don. Hodge listed a number of key events which changed this attitude during the period between the First World War and the 1970s. The first was that war itself, which contributed to an overall feeling of being in a new and unknown situation, and resulted in a lack of men able to offer themselves for ordination. In 1912, Roland Allen (1962), a missionary in North China, had advocated the case for 'tentmaker' ministry like that of the apostle Paul. Back in Britain, responding to the post-war sense of crisis, Allen continued to press the case for what he called 'voluntary ministry'. By the early 1930s, permission was given for bishops to ordain so-called volunteer priests, but in such a way that they were discouraged from actually doing so (Hodge, 1983, p. 11).

Hodge's second key event was the emergence of prophetic voices. Following Allen's lead, three bishops were significant in changing the mindset of the church: Barry (Southwell, 1941-63), Ramsey (Durham, and then successively Archbishop of York and of Canterbury, 1961-74) and Stockwood (Southwark, 1959-80). His third event was what he described as "the role of pilot projects" (p. 21), referring to the examples set by other Anglican provinces, notably Hong Kong<sup>2</sup>. His fourth was the Lambeth Conference of 1930, which although it did not materially advance the cause of voluntary priesthood, did at least put it on the agenda. His fifth significant event was the 1960 reprinting of Allen's 1930 book on voluntary ministry.

The situation following the Second World War was similar to that after the First in that there was again a sense of needing new ways forward, combined with a shortage of candidates for ordination. This time, however, necessary revisions of Canon Law were beginning to be considered. Although the 1932 Convocation of Canterbury concluded that "[w]e are unable to recommend, in normal cases, the ordination of men [*sic*] to the priesthood unless they can give their whole time to ministerial work" (Hodge, 1983, p. 12), by 1955 a Convocation of Canterbury report claimed that "some clergy were currently engaged in [secular] occupations to augment inadequate incomes", and that a more flexible approach would supplement parochial ministry, bridge the gap between industry and the church, and enable pastoral care in the secular world to be more effective (pp. 13-14).

In the 1950s, despite concerns about the effectiveness of ministry in the secular world, and the financial situation of clergy leading to a more pragmatic approach, the

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<sup>2</sup> Bishop Ronald Hall began ordaining NSMs in Hong Kong in the late 1930s; it was he who subsequently ordained Florence Li Tim-Oi, <http://www.hkskh.org/content.aspx?id=12&lang=1>, accessed 5 December 2018.

emphasis was still very much on parochial ministry. The Convocation of Canterbury Report No. 638 (1955) observed that the “tradition of a *parochial* ministry ... is so ingrained in our history and our thinking that we find it hard to consider alternative possibilities *de novo*” (pp. 14-15, cited in Hodge, 1983, p. 14, italics in Hodge). The Report continued that it was “essential that the character and function of these alternative ministries should be thought out, at the outset, without continual reference to the extent to which they can supplement the work of the parish priest”, recommending that anyone ordained to this ministry “should not be regarded as an unpaid curate”, but that “he [*sic*] should be left free to deal pastorally with the people who are already known to him in the course of his secular work” (p. 14).

It is evident that things were changing, and, in 1959, Canon C28 was revised to allow clergy to engage in secular work under the authority and license of their diocesan bishop (Archbishops’ Council, 2017b). Canon C28 is still in force today in the same form as in 1959:

C 28 Of the occupations of ministers

1. No minister holding ecclesiastical office shall engage in trade or any other occupation in such manner as to affect the performance of the duties of his [*sic*] office, except so far as he be authorized so to do under the statutory provisions in this behalf for the time being in force or he have a licence so to do granted by the bishop of the diocese.<sup>3</sup> (Archbishops’ Council, 2017b)

Seeing this as a happy ending to the story would be premature however. It would be easy to gain the impression from Hodge, reporting in 1983, that NSM, and in particular the ministry of those also employed in secular work, was doomed to failure. One reported reason was the perception that an ordained person in the workplace is no different from any other Christian in that context, so there was no need to ordain people if they were not going into full-time parish ministry; another was the difficulty for both lay and ordained in exercising any kind of ministry in the workplace beyond that of pastoral care (cf. Garfield, 2011). Some of Hodge’s respondents found that they became less interested in their secular jobs, while others were very concerned about the appropriate use of time, insisting that their parish ministry should not get in the way of doing their secular jobs properly. Some respondents reported reluctance on the part of their incumbents to involve them fully in parish life, including Sunday worship. More positively, Hodge recorded some respondents valuing the extended

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<sup>3</sup> For those of us who are not paid a stipend, permission to earn our living in some manner is now assumed without question.

contact with non-churchgoers and non-Christians, causing them to work through hard questions deriving from hard circumstances, and, in so doing, enriching their parish ministry.

Nothing much had changed when, in 1990, Hacking (1990), then a C of E priest<sup>4</sup>, wrote *A Vision for Non-Stipendiary Ministry*. In his Foreword, George Carey<sup>5</sup> admitted that while he did not “need convincing of the value of the non-stipendiary minister”, he was “very concerned that over the last ten years or so it seems we have lost our way” (Hacking, 1990, p. vii). In a prescient paragraph, Hacking observed that what was more worrying was “the capacity to force what may well indeed be a genuine new development into an existing mould”, commenting that “there is ... considerable resistance to this being anything other than some kind of ‘back-up’ to the existing form and shape of the Church, in which NSMs can be seen as the answer to the problem of shortage of clergy and money” (pp. 23-24).

Following a survey of self-supporting ministers (SSMs) conducted in 2010, Teresa Morgan highlighted many of the issues reported by Hodge. Although she noted considerable progress on issues to do with initial training and training during curacy, the “disempowerment and marginalization of NSMs in their own parishes” (Morgan, 2011, p. 5) shows little change from Hodge’s observations:

Non-stipendiary ministry’s potential mission to society has no doubt been inhibited by the traditional understanding of priestly ministry which is part of our cultural heritage. It is the parochial model which remains dominant in the minds of us all – non-stipendiary and stipendiary clergy, lay Church members, and in society at large. (Hodge, 1983, p. 86)

The lack of any policy, and the often-repeated comment by respondents that they feel ignored, overlooked or under-used, suggest strongly that the current picture is not one of stability but of stagnation. Far too often, it seems, dioceses train ordinands – at considerable expense – ordain them and place them in a parish or chaplaincy, and then simply forget about them. (Morgan, 2011, p. 12)

During the 1980s, the proportion of ministers in the Church of England in some form of SSM varied between 20% and 30%, and that remains the case still (Ministry

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<sup>4</sup> He now describes himself as a “full-time writer”, who has “no contact with religion of any form”, <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Rod-Hacking/e/B001K8DXQY>, accessed 20 December 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Then Bishop of Bath and Wells, later Archbishop of Canterbury.

Division, 2018, which gives figures for 2017, the most recent available at the time of writing). This means that throughout the past 30 years or so, roughly one in four ministers on average in the C of E has been SSM, many of them also in some kind of secular work – yet still the church has failed to move beyond treating them as stop-gaps to prop up parish ministry, and still the church fails to recognise adequately their distinctive contribution. This is not simply about personnel management or resourcing the church; as Hacking (1990) pointed out, it goes right to the heart of what the church believes about itself and its ministry. Hacking claimed that the church's failure to think through such issues derived from a lack of thought "about how the Church understands the relationship of God and the creation", asking: "Just what sort of God do we believe in? What is God's will for a world such as ours at this time? And what sort of ministry is appropriate to communicate, proclaim and incarnate these beliefs?" (p. 26).

In May 2013, a celebration of, and consultation on, SSM (originally published as Ministry Division, 2013) was held in Southwark Cathedral to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first ordinations of NSMs from the Southwark Ordination Course. Among the blessings noted were "richness of experience that comes from diverse backgrounds", "engaging with the real world and the opportunities that brings", "being a bridge between church and world", "freedom from needs of the institution", "we can walk alongside people", and "freedom ... to be on the fringe". Among the problems noted were "limited use of SSM gifts", "definition of role – try to be squeezed into a parochial traditional pattern", and the need for "remodelling the church to embrace the different models/experiences of ministry". The report further highlighted "being liminal and therefore connected", "freedom to be a different kind of priest", and "allowed to be ourselves, including among work colleagues". These quotations were taken from that report; it is, however, no longer available on the C of E website<sup>6</sup>.

In a conversation with Teresa Morgan (cf. Morgan, 2011) in October 2018 about the on-going effect of her research in the C of E, she told me that support had initially been forthcoming, but that with changes in personnel in Ministry Division, it had "run into the sand", and she no longer had much sense of anything happening. At

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<sup>6</sup> The event has not been entirely erased from the internet, however, since the text of Bishop Steven Croft's sermon on that occasion is still available: <http://www.with-intent.confiteor.org.uk/steven-croft-southwark-ordination-cours-anniversary.html>, accessed 5 December 2018. The C of E website has undergone major changes in the past few years, so I assume that the page linking this report was among those removed because they did not fit into the new structure.

present, it appears that the institutional church regards its SSMS as a necessary addition to its workforce, but does all its planning around the full-time stipendiary priest (FTS).

Although the institutional rhetoric is that everyone ordained priest is simply a priest, and so the criteria for selection are the same for all (Ministry Division, 2017, p. 5), as soon some are labelled NSM or SSM or MSE, that suggests an identity which is not simply that of priest. In this thesis, through examining my own self-understanding and that of my participants, I tell our stories in our own words. Key aspects include what it means to us as ordained priests to work with God in God's world, participating in the *missio Dei* through both our secular work and our parish-based ministry. This will be underpinned by engagement with relevant theological literature, revealing the unique gift that we bring to the church's ministry.

## 1.2 Research Design

My research is inductive and exploratory in nature, seeking to investigate the self-understanding of people whom I now designate as PSWs, who both self-identify as such and also satisfy my selection criteria (section 3.1). Because I was interested in discovering what a group of people think about themselves, my design needed to be qualitative, with theory emerging from the data, rather than theory predetermining my research strategy, since there is as yet no theoretical characterisation of the PSW available for a starting point. My research design therefore needed to be flexible and able to react to emerging significant questions and discoveries. It is summarised in Figure 1<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> CIG refers to the co-operative inquiry group, IPA to interpretative phenomenological analysis.



**Figure 1: Overview of the research method**

CIG: sessions 1-4, March-May 2016

- Raise good questions
- Data - notes from sessions

Online questionnaire: Nov 2016 - July 2017

- Demographic data
- Basic information about M/PSE life
- Recruitment of interviewees

In-depth interviews: March-Sept 2017

- 6 participants
- 1st day (morning): data - contextual notes
- 1st day (afternoon): semi-structured interviews, data - verbatim transcripts
- Follow-up interviews, data - verbatim transcripts

CIG: final session, Sept 2017

- Discussion of follow-up interview transcripts
- Data - notes from session

IPA

- Analysis of interviews --> superordinate themes
- Confirmation of themes in CIG notes

Interpretation

- 1st level of IPA --> patterns in superordinate themes form four PSW narratives

Form a conceptual framework for understanding my data, and for the presentation of my contribution to knowledge and practice'

- 2nd level of IPA --> priestly identity, work and sacred presence form a conceptual framework for the PSW

Before planning the fieldwork, in writing my Stage 1 essays, I investigated a range of theological literature, which led to the tentative identification of some themes which might prove relevant. In the first essay (Gage, 2013), I focused on the MSE who was

in ordained, licensed or authorised ministry, and also in secular employment, using the biblical trope of exile as a hermeneutic key to link the two contexts together, aiming to establish a 'theology of the gap' between church and secular work. I explored the experience of NSMs in the 1970s (Hodge, 1983), connecting this with *The Church Times* 2010 survey of SSMS (as by then we were generally known) (Morgan, 2011). In my Paper 2 (Gage, 2014), I charted my journey from ambivalence about the nature of 'priestly' ministry to a sacramental view of priesthood, rooted not in the traditional C of E christological theology of priesthood, but in a trinitarian perspective which I felt provided a more hospitable context for the MSE. By the end of that paper, I had realised that identity would be a significant theme in the next phase of my research, because, for me, being an ordained priest had become central to my sense of myself: I felt that it was my "joint vocation [that] chose me" (p. 12) rather than my choosing it. My third paper (Gage, 2015) comprised the first iteration of my research proposal, in which I identified identity, priestly presence and the importance of secular work, as all fundamental to the understanding of the priest in secular employment (PSE), as by then I was calling myself and others like me.

As part of my research, I carried out empirical fieldwork which started with a co-operative inquiry group (CIG) in which we formulated questions we deemed worth pursuing further, and worked out a research method. I used an online questionnaire as a means to access both more information about what M/PSEs (the acronym I used at this point) were doing, and to recruit people for the subsequent interview stage. Interview participants were selected on a purposive basis from those who indicated that they would be interested in taking part, to provide a range of ages and lengths of time since ordination, together with varied experience in both the institutional church and in secular work.

The fieldwork produced a significant quantity of data, comprising notes from the CIG sessions, questionnaire responses, contextual notes for the six interviewees, and six pairs of transcripts from the interviews. The data provided demographic information, contextual information, and access to what the interviewees thought about themselves as people who, as ordained priests, engage in secular work, so enabling me to create a rich description of the phenomenon of the PSW.

I used the method of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to enable me to process my data, and interpret it. From this analysis, I first cast my findings in the form of four narratives for the PSW (chapter 7). Focusing on the main superordinate themes from the analysis, and in engagement with theological literature, I then present a conceptual framework in which the uniqueness of our vocation is displayed (chapters 8 to 10).

### 1.3 Evolution of the research question and our name

The story of the evolution of my research question is linked to the story of the evolution of the term I use to describe people like me, who are licensed priests in ministry in the C of E, and also engage in significant secular work (my precise criteria are discussed in section 3.1). In the C of E, people who are self-supporting ministers (SSMs) and who see their ministry as primarily focused in their workplaces are known as *ministers in secular employment* (MSE). In the first year or two of this research project, I realised that, for me at least, it is my being a *priest*, not simply a minister, that is significant, and so I started to use the term *priest in secular employment* (PSE). However, when I wanted to recruit participants for my fieldwork, I used M/PSE, partly as a more inclusive term, and partly because by then I had discovered that at least one of my CIG colleagues, an ordained priest, thought of herself as a minister rather than a priest, (this issue is discussed in detail in section 8.2). During the period when I was working on the analysis of my data, I started to use PSE again, having discussed with my interviewees whether they felt the designation of ‘priest’ or ‘minister’ was more appropriate. Finally, at a late stage in the analytical process, I realised that what is significant is not whether or not we are in secular *employment*, but that we do secular *work*, and so the term I have finally settled on is *priest in secular work* (PSW), and that is what I use in this thesis, other than when quoting what people said, or on occasions when it would be obviously anachronistic. These shifts are relevant to the development of my conceptual framework, and are therefore further discussed at later points in the thesis, particularly section 8.2.

In the early months of my research, I wrote in my research journal: “What is the ontological secret at the heart of your research? What is at the heart of the research which touches your passionate depths?” and wrestling with these questions has been a key aspect of the development of my research question. Initially, it was all about my struggle to reconcile feelings of joy and fulfilment on the one hand, with confusion, discomfort, disorientation, and even hurt, on the other, as I tried to accommodate feeling deskilled, and my experience of the blurring of boundaries that derived from my new status as an ordained person in part-time parish ministry continuing to work in mathematics education.

At this stage, my research question was:

How does an ontological approach to the understanding of the priest in secular employment contribute to a theology of priesthood?

I focused this in two ways:

What does our identity as priests mean in our secular workplaces and for the work itself?

What does our identity through our employment in secular work mean for our understanding of ourselves as priests?

This question, with its two sub-questions, emerged from exploring my own experience in the early stages of this research. Other questions that I asked myself during this stage included:

What am I for?

How do I integrate my awareness of myself as priest and my awareness of myself in my secular work?

The nature of, and part played, by the CIG in this research is discussed in detail in chapter 3, but is briefly outlined here because of its role in the evolution of the research question. The CIG consisted of a group of three other PSWs and myself. We met together four times initially, to explore what it meant to us to be PSWs, and to agree interesting questions that I might investigate further in the interview stage of my fieldwork. By this point, I had been a PSW for several years, and, gradually finding ways of holding the tension between my priestly and secular identities, was more comfortable with the role. With the CIG, I was therefore ready to look beyond my own perspective to consider what the PSW might bring to the institutional church.

Reflecting on the initial CIG sessions, I recast my research question in more functional terms:

The default of priestly ministry as full-time stipendiary ministry is no longer appropriate. How might the model of the M/PSE complement and extend it for the Church of England in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

The research question continued to evolve as I completed the interview stage of my research, and then met again with the CIG. Interesting questions identified at this point included:

What does it mean to be a minister or priest in a secular workplace?

How is the ministry of the M/PSE similar to or different from any other priestly ministry, or that of the lay Christian working in a secular job?

How are we, whose calling it is, to understand the vocation to which God has called us?

As a PSW myself, other questions which I found significant included:

How am I to get beneath the surface of what we are and do, to explore our self-understanding?

To what extent is any one of us typical? Are there common threads?

How do you uncover and process that which it is difficult to know about yourself?

There was still work to be done on clarifying my research question, but given my chosen research methodology and method, discussed in detail in chapters 2 to 4, I always intended that the research question would emerge through the work of the CIG which was not yet complete. The lack of a single research question was not a problem for the interviews I conducted, as they were about going as deeply into the experience and self-understanding of my interviewees as possible, and allowing the direction my research then took to be decided by the CIG's subsequent discussion of the data.

By the final CIG session, the form of the research question that we were working on was:

If the PSE could be considered as a gift of God to the Church of England, how are we, whose calling this is, to understand the vocation to which God has called us?

Subsequent discussion amended this to:

To what extent and in what ways could the PSE be God's gift to the Church of England in the 21st century?

Realising that 'God's gift' was not well-defined, but using the insight this phrase provided, led to a further adaptation:

What strategic contribution could the concept and practice of the PSE make to ministry in the Church of England?

As I worked on the main findings and insights from the research, however, it became clear to me that this was not the question I was answering. As a PSW, it matters to me that the general approaches I use in all aspects of my work are consistent, and so, as I wrestled with the form my research question should take, I realised that I could be making better use of insights from my secular work. Since retirement from paid employment, I have been a freelance maths educator (among other things), leading workshops, mainly for teachers, sometimes for 11-16 year-old students, which are data-driven. The workshops start with experiments, and we then discuss in detail what the results tell us; the next stage is to consider what we would expect to

happen, and to make comparisons; the final stage is to use insights from these comparisons to derive the theory that students are expected to know. This does not set out to be a way of introducing students to formal proof, but is a pedagogical approach which recommends working from data, always asking ‘what is the story that the data is telling you?’. This encourages students to keep open minds, through which understanding and intuition can be nurtured, rather than simply learning how to manipulate formulae, without any real sense of why they are doing it, or what their results mean. Reflecting on this approach, I concluded that this research also needs to be data-driven, and so I needed to word my question in such a way that I could answer it by writing the story that the data was telling me.

The phenomenological paradigm in which I have chosen to situate my research focuses on describing ‘the thing itself’ (chapter 2), and to enable me to do that, I decided to use the phenomenological method of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA, chapter 4). In IPA, research questions should be open, “focused on the experiences, and/or understandings, of particular people in a particular context” (Larkin and Thompson, 2012, p. 103). They are often framed in the form ‘How do people who ... make sense of ...?’, and the focus of the interpretation is then on the personal meaning- and sense-making of people in a specific context who share a particular experience. My research question is thus:

How do people who are simultaneously ordained, licensed, priests in the C of E, and engaged in secular work, make sense of their particular vocation?

In this chapter, I have outlined the gap in knowledge which I seek to fill, and the process by which I have arrived at my research question. In the chapters that follow, I present the research that I have undertaken to answer that question, and the conceptual framework for the PSW that I have derived from it. Situating my research in a phenomenological context is described in chapter 2, where I describe my methodology. The research method which ensued is the subject of chapter 3, and a description of the data and method of analysis form the content of chapter 4. In chapter 5, I describe the process of curation through which I selected excerpts from the data and displayed them in the light of my own experience and in dialogue with relevant literature, in order to justify the conceptual framework for the PSW which I have constructed. In chapter 6, I locate my research in the field of theological literature, in particular in the *missio Dei*.

The four chapters that follow contain the findings of the research and my interpretation of them, which together build my conceptual understanding. Chapter 7 is an account of four PSW narratives, motivated by significant questions from the

CIG. Part way through the analysis, I participated in a study day led by David Ford, Emeritus Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge<sup>8</sup>, in which he used three questions from the first chapter of John's gospel to frame discussion of the whole gospel. Listening to him, I felt that they could also provide an analytic framework for the theological interpretation into which the four PSW narratives would lead. The three questions are 'who are you?', 'what do you seek?', and 'where are you staying?' (John 1.19, 38). In the first of these chapters (8), I examine the identity of the PSW as priest; in the second (chapter 9), I focus on the PSW's search for God through their secular work; and in the third (chapter 10), I explore sacramental presence as a key aspect of a theological understanding of the PSW.

In the final chapter (11), I present my overall conclusions, discussing the contribution to knowledge and practice which I believe my research offers. It is my overall intention to use relevant theological literature and the data generated by my fieldwork to open up a new and creative understanding of priesthood as seen from the perspective, and within the practice, of PSWs and thus to provide theological underpinning for a model of priesthood which has the potential to enrich the way in which the C of E understands the ministry of PSWs, and which enables practitioners to play their part in the *missio Dei*.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.divinity.cam.ac.uk/directory/david-ford>, accessed 20 December 2018.





## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Research paradigm

In this thesis, the experience of PSWs is presented using methods which are qualitative in nature. The qualitative researcher studies “things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013, pp. 6-7). In the qualitative paradigm, it is assumed that because what is observed is open to many different interpretations, the story presented is a construction, and that there is therefore no single, ‘correct’ story to be discovered independently of the researcher (cf. Swinton and Mowat, 2006). However, this is not to suggest that there is no reality outside the mind of the researcher: the experience of those participating is real, as is the reality of the stories they tell. The research task is to present a story which is authentic and values the contribution of the participants, and thus offers readers insight into life stories in which they have an interest.

Methodologies employed in practical theology are generally hermeneutical, correlational, and critical (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, pp. 75-76): hermeneutical, because the researcher’s task is to interpret what participants say about their experience; correlational, because theology, history/tradition and experience should mutually inform each other; critical, because the practical theologian must be aware of, and able to work with, complexity. The methodology must also be theological, allowing something worthwhile to be said about the nature of God’s work in and through God’s people, and specifically in this case, God’s PSWs. I have chosen to situate this research in the methodology known as phenomenology, because its focus is on describing ‘the thing itself’, as discussed below. All methodologies and methods have limitations and constraints, however, and this is discussed further in section 2.5.

### 2.2 Phenomenology

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Husserl, a German philosopher, developed a philosophy which he named phenomenological reduction. He made a clear distinction between experience and observed phenomena on the one hand, and any reality which lay behind them on the other. Bakewell (2016, p. 39) described Husserl’s philosophy as “an exhausting but exciting discipline in which concentration and effort must constantly be renewed” because it required “*a new way of looking at things*’ ... that brings us back again and again to our project, so as ‘to see what stands before our eyes, to distinguish, to describe’” (original italics, citing Husserl, *Ideas*, 2012, p. 39).

#### Glossary

CIG	Co-operative inquiry group
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
PSW	Priest in secular work

Moustakas (1994, p. 13) defined the aim of phenomenology as determining “what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it”. The experience itself is not open to our view, however: all that is accessible to others is the account provided by such a person. In describing an experience, the person doing the describing is selecting what to say and what to omit, how to say it, what to emphasise, and much else, and so I would amend Moustakas’ definition to: phenomenology is the process of determining the meaning of an experience, through the comprehensive description, by the person who had the experience, of their interpretation of the experience at the point in time when they are describing the experience. What Husserl called ‘the thing itself’ (Bakewell, 2016, p. 40) then becomes ‘the thing as interpreted by person X today’, which will necessarily be different from ‘the thing as interpreted by person Y today’, or even ‘the thing as interpreted by person X yesterday or tomorrow’. The primary data is then the stories people tell about their experiences, with each person’s data regarded as independent, even when they are describing the same experience as someone else.

Husserl’s focus was “the experiential content of consciousness” (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p. 12), which he wanted to find by removing surface and inessential features in order to “attend to the taken-for-granted experience” (p. 13). His method required bracketing the ‘taken-for-granted’ core so that it could be described free from embellishment, a process he named the *epoché*. This core would then be viewed through different lenses, in which a particular aspect is brought into sharp focus, while the rest becomes simply background, the *reduction*. Through this process, the essential, invariant properties of the core of the experience would become visible, allowing the essence of the phenomenon to be described (pp. 13-14).

In his later work, Husserl focused more and more on consciousness itself. Heidegger, a student of Husserl’s, moved away from this emphasis to consider the hermeneutic and existential aspects of phenomenological philosophy (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p. 16). Heidegger defined *Dasein*, “a pre-ontological understanding of Being” (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, cited in Wheeler, 2011). I take this to mean that *Dasein* encompasses the essence of being human which is what makes a biological person human. *Dasein* is fundamentally relational, and through ‘intersubjectivity’ is able both to communicate with other people, and to make sense of them (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p. 17).

The next key figure in the evolution of phenomenology was Merleau-Ponty, whose focus was the embodied nature of how we relate to the world around us. It is not that our bodies are acted upon by the world outside, but that they are the means by which

we communicate with that world, and it with us (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p. 18). We can never fully comprehend someone else's experience because we can never occupy the same embodied place in it.

Phenomenology is not a simple concept, but as "a philosophy of experience that attempts to understand the ways in which meaning is constructed in and through human experience" (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p. 106), it takes the raw material of human experience as the locus for finding meaning, not by explaining how things work, but through insight. In "providing deep insights and understandings into the way that things are, [phenomenology] enables people to see the world differently, and in seeing it differently to act differently towards it" (p. 107). This is comparable to a form of theological reflection described by Graham, Walton and Ward (2005, pp. 18-46) as 'theology by heart' or the 'living human document'. Experience, feelings and insight contribute to living human documents through, for example, journalling, narration, and spiritual autobiography, so that the person's inner life is transformed into data for subsequent reflection and analysis.

In phenomenology, I found both a methodology and a research method which I had unknowingly been using for some time in my secular field. Through my work on a new approach to teaching probability in secondary schools, I became convinced that the traditional approach of building up theory, then performing calculations based on that theory, was pedagogically unsound, and made probability difficult to teach, difficult to learn, and quite tedious. Instead, with colleagues, I devised a series of practical activities, in which students would gather data, and then allow their data to speak, so that experience would help them to build a sense of what might be expected to happen in a given experiment, and from which they could then derive theory. Phenomenological methods allow data to speak for itself, without requiring theory to be propounded first, which resonates strongly with my secular work, bringing together two facets of who I am as a PSW – the researcher and the educator.

## **2.3 Method of analysis**

I have chosen the method of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as a tool for use in the analysis. IPA originated in the 1990s through the work of the psychologist, Jonathan Smith, as a way "to understand lived experience and how participants themselves make sense of their experiences" (Smith, n.d.). It is "phenomenological in that it wishes to explore an individual's personal perception or account of an event or state as opposed to attempting to produce an objective record of the event or state itself". IPA has its roots in critical realism, which claims that

“there are stable and enduring features of reality that exist independently of human conceptualisation”, and in a social cognition paradigm which is based on the premise that what humans say and do reflects how they experience and understand reality (Fade, 2004, p. 647). This legitimates the use of interview data to access interviewees’ own understanding of their experience.

In the way that Smith uses IPA, it is also idiographic, “committed to the detailed study of the particular case before moving to more general claims”. IPA acknowledges, however, that it is not possible to understand participants’ experience without taking into account what the researcher brings to the process through their interpretation. Since “the researcher is the primary analytical instrument “in IPA, their “beliefs are not seen as biases to be eliminated”, but as the basis on which the researcher makes sense of the experience participants describe (Fade, 2004, p 648). What differentiates IPA from other forms of qualitative thematic analysis is the inclusion of a second level of analysis, thus providing a double hermeneutic: the first level is the sense that the participant gives to their experience, the second level is the researcher’s interpretation of that (Smith and Osborn, 2007, p. 53).

### ***My position in the research***

I was attracted to phenomenology as both ontology and methodology because, as Bakewell expressed Husserl’s argument:

... ‘to the things themselves’ meant: don’t waste time on the interpretations that accrue upon things, and especially don’t waste time wondering whether the things are real. Just look at *this* that’s presenting itself to you, whatever *this* may be, and describe it as precisely as possible. (Bakewell, 2016, p. 2, original italics)

This is exactly what I wanted to do for the PSW. Heidegger’s argument that “[p]hilosophers all through history have wasted their time on secondary questions ... while forgetting to ask the one that matters most, the question of Being. What is it for a thing to *be*? What does it mean to say that you yourself *are*?” (pp. 2-3, original italics) confirmed my decision to locate my research in a phenomenological methodology. Reading Bakewell’s account of phenomenology, I experienced a ‘light-bulb moment’ – Husserl and Heidegger had already wrestled with what I was wrestling with, taking seriously my questions ‘who am I?’, and ‘what am I for?’, and providing a way of trying to answer them. It is not overstating it to say that Heidegger’s emphasis on being, and Husserl’s focus on bracketing off preconceptions and simply describing a phenomenon, were an epiphany for me not only as researcher, but also as a PSW.

“My perception, the thing I perceive, and the experience or act interrelate to make the objective subjective and the subjective objective” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 59). What is deemed significant will inevitably reflect what the researcher personally finds significant, and so researcher and research subject cannot realistically be distinguished from each other. The researcher’s thoughts, reflections, intuitions and judgements are primary data therefore, and a form of living human document. Given this, I considered the method of autoethnography, in which the researcher describes and analyses their own personal experience in order to understand a culture from the inside. Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2010, p. 3) claimed that autoethnography is about “producing meaningful, accessible, and evocative research grounded in personal experience”. This would take account of my status as an insider: I cannot stand aside and report on what I find as a disinterested observer, but autoethnography embraces the researcher’s perspective to a greater extent than I envisaged. It is a fundamental aspect of the phenomenological methodology that previous experience and understanding be bracketed out, allowing what is being observed to speak for itself. As Gadamer emphasised, this is impossible, that we always not only do, but must, work from our current understanding in order to make any sense of what we observe (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, pp. 110-116).

However, because there is no one way of being a PSW, an autoethnographic account would not have enabled me to take account of the richness of experience that I wished to encompass in this research. My position is thus closer to that of Etherington (2004, p. 19), who wrote that in her PhD, she “included selected parts of my own story but bracketed off: I contextualized myself so that the reader could recognize my potential biases and how my previous knowledge of the phenomenon under exploration would inform the study – as would be expected in phenomenology”. Because I am myself a PSW, I include my own participation in the CIG and in the interviews, and I preface later chapters with aspects of my own story so that the reader can be aware of my assumptions and biases, which determine why certain themes resonate for me, and inform how I present and interpret the words of the other participants.

## **2.4 Validity and critique of the methodology**

A qualitative research design assumes that evidence is not simply ‘out there’, waiting to be collected, but that it has to be produced, constructed and represented (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013, pp. 21-22). Data collection and analysis take place within the context of the research, and the researcher and participants are intrinsic to it, so no part of the process can be deemed neutral, and subjective and objective are not

distinct categories. The context dictates to a large extent what is possible and/or permissible: the researcher dictates the design of the research method, who the participants are, what the data consists of, and how it is then analysed; participants have stories they wish and are able to tell, and stories they do not wish, or are not able, to tell. The phenomenological methodology I have chosen means that I want to articulate a rich description of the phenomenon of the PSW, rather than attempting to explain us – indeed, I am not sure what an ‘explanation’ would look like!

A criticism of phenomenology is that it assumes that it is possible to know an experience or event, and thus to provide such a description. Post-modern critics, such as Derrida, would say that, on the contrary, “there are no stable grounds from which to know the world once and for all” (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 36). While Husserl’s search for pre-existing phenomenological essences might suggest the metaphor of the researcher as miner, I do not believe that knowledge of the type I am seeking is already there, simply waiting to be uncovered: rather that, working with other PSWs, we can together explore our identity as PSWs, finding such common ground as exists, and from this I can construct a description of the phenomenon of the PSW. I thus prefer the metaphor of the researcher as traveller, walking with the participant, exploring the landscape together, as we seek causeways through unstable grounds.

It is a premise of phenomenology that it is possible to find invariant essential meanings in the descriptions of events or experiences (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 61). Husserl, the father of phenomenology, believed that intuition precedes empirical knowledge (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26), and so it is necessary for the researcher to start with themselves, seeking “increasingly to know herself or himself within the experience being investigated” (p. 47), since how a phenomenon is perceived depends entirely on who is perceiving it. While I agree with that last statement, I cannot see that it necessarily requires, or follows from, Husserl’s premise. My experience as a teacher suggests that intuition does not necessarily precede empirical research, and indeed as I have already described, the method of teaching probability which I initiated depended on empirical research as a way to develop and nurture intuition. In carrying out this research, I have discovered that through the process of investigating the phenomenon of the PSW, I have come to know myself better, but it has been a cyclic process. I agree, nevertheless, with Moustakas (1994, p. 59) that “what I see is interwoven with how I see it, with whom I see it, and with whom I am”. While the possibility of bracketing out prior knowledge and assumptions is also a premise of phenomenology, I am aware that there is an inherent contradiction here with my position as an insider, a fellow participant:

inevitably I process what I hear the other participants say, whether in the CIG, or in the interview process, through my own experience and biases (cf. Kaufman, 2015, p. 102).

As described in section 2.2, phenomenological reduction involves two stages. In the first stage (the *epoché*), the question ‘What does this phenomenon look like?’ is considered, and, in the second (the reduction), the question ‘How did the experience of the phenomenon come to be what it is?’. It is important to note that these two questions, summarising the *epoché* and the reduction, are not the same as the double hermeneutic of IPA. Phenomenology is a philosophical discipline within which research can be carried out; IPA, on the other hand, is not a philosophical discipline, but a method of analysing data. It situates itself within a phenomenological paradigm as a tool to enable the researcher to perform the *epoché* and reduction. Some phenomenologists are nevertheless critical of IPA as a phenomenological tool.

IPA was critiqued by Giorgi on the grounds that it “has little to do with continental philosophical phenomenology” (Giorgi, 2010, p. 4), a claim that Smith dismissed on the grounds that Giorgi had only considered a very small sample of his work (Smith, 2010, p. 187). Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) explained that IPA is phenomenological because it aims to examine human lived experience “in a way which as far as possible enables that experience to be expressed in its own terms, rather than according to predefined category systems” (p. 32). They saw IPA as being phenomenological in the tradition of Heidegger, and hermeneutic in the tradition of Gadamer, rather than falling neatly into the more philosophical tradition of Husserl. Where Husserl’s focus was on consciousness *per se*, IPA is concerned with “the meaning which is bestowed by the participant” which “as it becomes an experience, can be said to represent the experience itself” (p. 33).

Van Manen (2017, p. 777) claimed that what is essential to a phenomenological inquiry is the *epoché* (suspension of judgement) and the reduction, and that what phenomenology offers is “originary [*sic*] understandings and insights in the phenomenality [*sic*] of human experiences” (pp. 778-779). Finding these is, however, very difficult, and not helped by “simplistic schemes, superficial programs, step-by step-procedures, and cookery book recipes” (p. 779), a critique aimed at Smith’s use of IPA. In rebutting van Manen’s critique, that IPA focuses on the participant’s experience and understanding, rather than on the phenomenon itself, Smith (2018, pp. 1956-1957) pointed out that prereflective sensation and consequent reflection are both aspects of the lived experience, and that reflection is thus part of the phenomenon. For him, the role of the researcher is to work with participants in sense-making through acting as a witness and a co-participant. It is this which makes

IPA a hermeneutic activity, and also aligns it with Heidegger's conceptualisation of hermeneutic phenomenology.

What constitutes phenomenological analysis is clearly contested. In one of a series of posts on *Research Gate*, Simms claimed that "the central point of connection in all schools indebted to Husserlian phenomenology is the analysis of human experience" (Simms, 2015). She emphasised that IPA, like all phenomenological methods, is dependent on good data and a method of analysis in which the researcher sets aside preconceptions as far as this is possible, approaching the data with an open mind rather than trying to prove a hypothesis. She warned of the danger of 'cherry picking' rather than accounting for the "whole complex experiential field", so that all that is essential to the experience is found. "In phenomenological research you are looking for the 'essences' or 'general structures or themes' that constitute X." Establishing the validity of the method, as I used it, is discussed further in section 4.5.



### 3 Research method

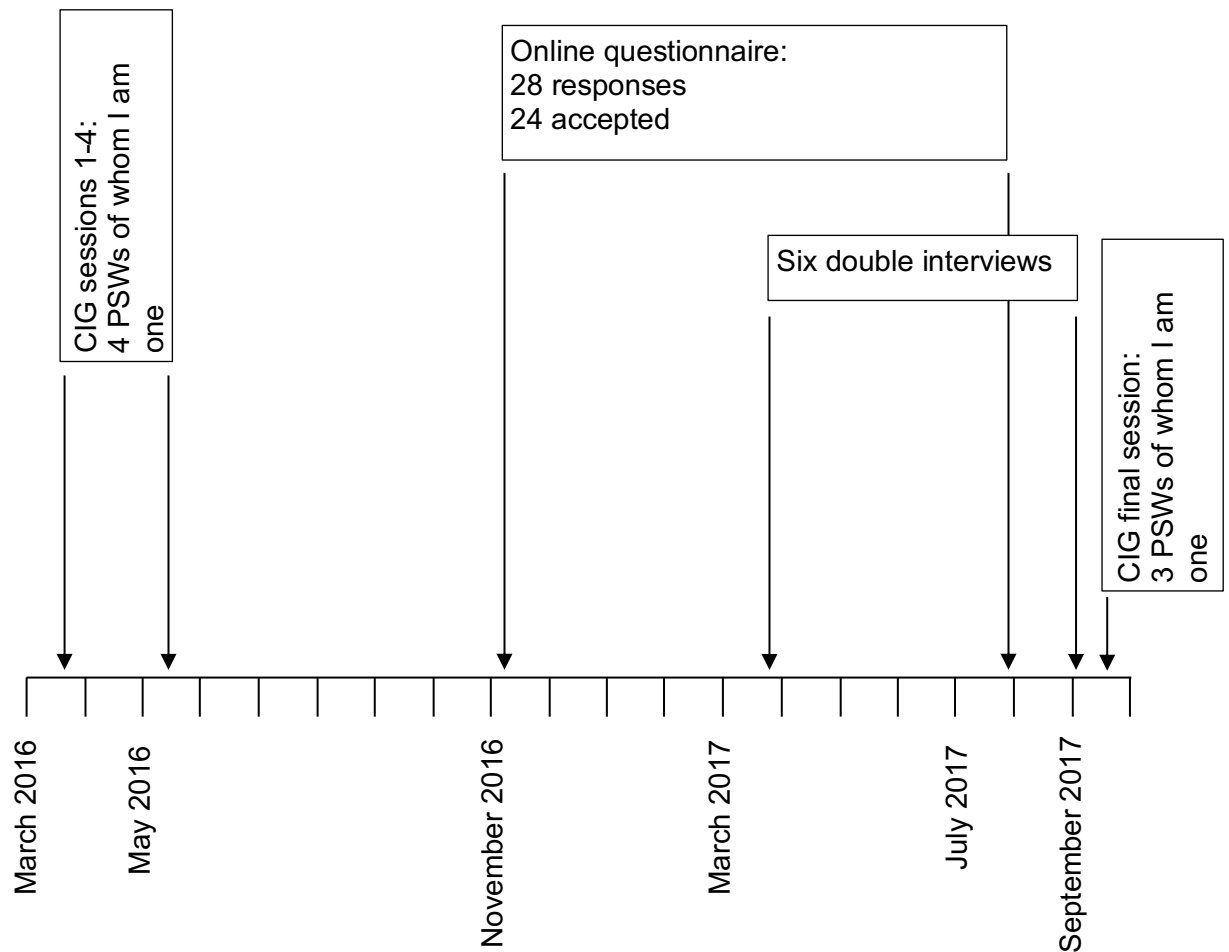
Empirical phenomenological research is reactive, seeking to avoid the constraints of preconceived theoretical constructs (Moustakas, 1994, p. 12). As discussed in the previous chapter, the phenomenological process starts with gathering data, minimising preconceptions about their interpretation, with all data given equal value. Previous or external knowledge is put to one side, so that in observing what is before them, the researcher is open to new awareness and understanding (Moustakas, 1994, p. 86). The

question being answered at this stage is ‘*What* does this phenomenon look like?’ which must be answered from as many different perspectives as possible in ways which focus simply on the phenomenon itself – in this research, the interpretations PSWs give to their experience. In the second stage, seeking to remove what is repetitious or irrelevant, while being careful not to eliminate voices which need to be heard but which do not conform to mainstream stories, the researcher looks across all the data for common threads, clustering them into coherent narratives, aiming to answer the question: ‘*How* did the experience of the phenomenon come to be what it is?’ in as many ways as possible. The final stage is the synthesis of meanings and essences, finding “that which is common or universal, the condition or quality without which a thing would not be what it is” (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 100, cf. Husserl, 1931, *Ideas*).

Ricoeur saw narrative as a fundamental way in which we construct identity (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 10), and in this research, the stories that PSWs tell about their experience and their self-understanding are forms of primary data – the living human document (Graham, Walton and Ward, 2005, p. 18). In order to collect in-depth narrative data from PSWs, I planned three stages in the research design: a co-operative inquiry group (CIG), an online questionnaire (which collected qualitative data, not quantitative) and semi-structured interviews. Figure 2 shows the timeline for these: the initial CIG sessions in March-May 2016; the online questionnaire, which was open for responses between November 2016 and late July 2017; the interviews, which took place between March and early September 2017; and the final CIG session, which occurred later in September 2017.

#### Glossary

C of E	Church of England
CIG	Co-operative inquiry group
FTS	Full-time stipendiary (priest)
IPA	Interpretative phenomenological analysis
M/PSE	Minister/priest in secular employment
PSW	Priest in secular work
SSM	Self-supporting minister/ministry

**Figure 2: Research method timeline**

Choosing to initiate the fieldwork through a CIG was a way of using my insider status. It would have been nonsensical to imagine that I could study PSWs from any kind of external vantage point, and I also wanted to ensure that as many voices as possible contributed on an equal basis. Our four different perspectives were a strength of the CIG, and although I was the initiator of the process, I do not feel that my voice was more privileged than the other three. The main task I asked the CIG to work on was to identify what were important threads that I would need to follow, and what could be left to one side because it was not something that we all deemed significant. In identifying what would be significant, the CIG suggested potential research questions, and also helped me to decide how best to proceed with the fieldwork which would be needed to explore the questions.

The preliminary phase of the CIG consisted of four sessions at roughly three week intervals, in which the four of us met for about an hour and a half on each occasion. On the basis of what emerged from those discussions, I planned an interview process, which would use an online questionnaire to find potential interviewees from among PSWs, followed by six single, semi-structured interviews. However, the

increasing depth the CIG achieved through the four sessions suggested to me that single interviews might not provide comparable depth in the interview data. I therefore decided I would spend a day with each interviewee in their location. The morning would be an opportunity for us to get to know each other, and for me to find out more about their context. In the afternoon, there would be a more formal interview, which I would record. There would then be a second recorded interview a week or two later in which I would debrief the participant on the first day, and reflect with them on the data from it. When the interview phase was complete, and the transcripts of the recordings were available, I sent the transcripts of the follow-up interviews to the CIG members, and we met a fifth time to reflect on them together.

My chosen method of four initial CIG sessions, an online questionnaire, six double interviews, and then a final CIG session generated a significant quantity of rich data. Analysis began in the final CIG session, during which we identified themes we felt were worth further consideration from the follow-up interview transcripts. These themes formed the basis for constructing the conceptual framework which is explored in chapters 7 to 10.

The next stage of analysis was to immerse myself in the data. Because the methodology I used was phenomenological, I felt that the method of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), discussed in section 4.2, would be the best tool to use for detailed analysis. Before commencing that, I read the interview transcripts, considering the question that the first stage of phenomenological reduction asks: ‘*What does this phenomenon look like?*’ It became clear quite quickly that there were common threads which had also featured in the initial CIG sessions and these formed the basis for the full analysis (sections 4.3 and 4.4).

### **3.1 The participants**

The proportion of self-supporting clergy (SSMs) in the C of E has been fairly steady at just below 30% since 2013. National statistics for 2017 indicate that there were 7,790 stipendiary clergy (excluding ordained chaplains and clergy in non-parish roles) and 3,060 self-supporting clergy in licensed parochial ministry (Ministry Division, 2018, p. 2). Not all of these SSMs will satisfy my criteria for PSWs:

- they are ordained C of E priests, who regularly participate in parish ministry
- they engage in ‘secular work’ for a significant proportion of each week
- by ‘secular’ work, I mean work which is not directly related to parish ministry or chaplaincy, and which does not require the person to be an ordained, licensed or authorised minister

- the 'work' could be paid, through contracted employment or freelance, or voluntary

Although I know that a proportion of the 3,060 licensed SSMs in the C of E are PSWs, there is no data which would enable me to know how many are PSWs, and how many are not.

Twenty eight clergy, including myself, were participants in my research. Twenty seven were from the Anglican Provinces of Canterbury and York, representing nearly 1% of SSMs in the C of E. Another participant, from the Church in Wales, was introduced to me by a mutual acquaintance, and, since ministry in the C of E and Church in Wales is interchangeable<sup>9</sup>, I felt this was a valid inclusion.

The CIG consisted of myself plus three colleagues, all previously known to me, who responded to an email sent to all SSMs in my diocese inviting them to take part in such a group. The interview phase was initiated with an online questionnaire, which was sent to all SSMs in our diocese, plus others personally known to me (including several who were Bishop's Officers for SSM elsewhere<sup>10</sup>), inviting them to respond, and also to send the link to anyone else who fitted my criteria. Of the 28 people who responded, 24 were or had recently been simultaneously serving in licensed parish ministry as a priest while also spending a significant amount of time in some form of secular work (whether paid or unpaid), and so met my criteria. Of the four who did not, two were deacons rather than priests, one was a chaplain who did not appear to have ever served in a parish role, and the fourth provided so little information that it was unclear whether they fitted my criteria or not.

People completing the questionnaire were invited to submit contact details if they wished to take part in the interview process, and 17 of the 24 did so. I initially short-listed seven potential interviewees, choosing them so that there was diversity of gender, length of time since ordination, and secular work experience; my selection process was thus purposive, to ensure that I would hear varied accounts of life as a PSW. Two of the seven I approached did not then respond to my invitation to participate further. Of the five who did agree to participate, three were not previously

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<sup>9</sup> The Church in Wales is an Anglican Province, although not a state church, subscribing to the same doctrines as the C of E. A minister in the Church in Wales can be appointed to a post in the C of E, and vice versa: Rowan Williams was Bishop of Monmouth, then Archbishop of Wales, prior to his appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury.

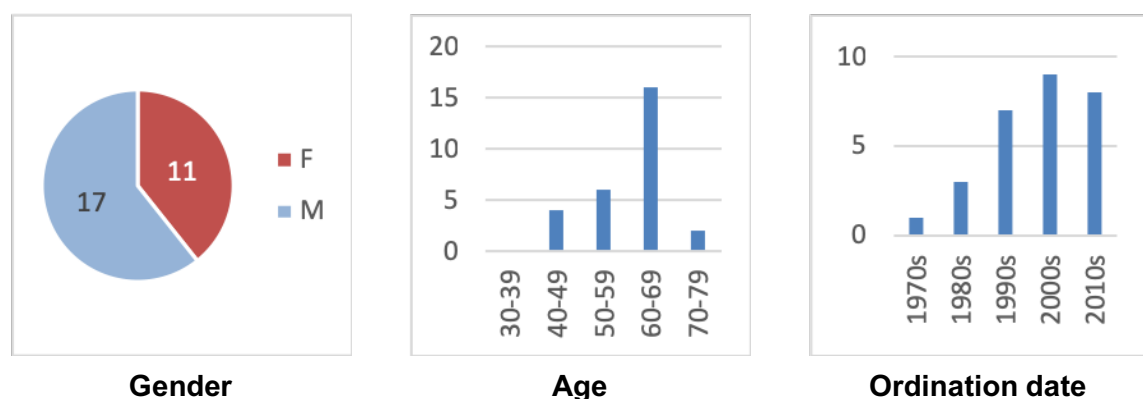
<sup>10</sup> From the summer of 2014 until the autumn of 2018, I was the Bishop's Officer for SSMs in my own diocese.

known to me, one I had met very briefly over ten years ago, and the other I had known quite well prior to their move to another diocese a few years ago. I decided that these five would be sufficient, but when the opportunity came to recruit a sixth PSW in Wales, I felt that was too good an opportunity to ignore, since his secular experience was quite different from the other five, and so would significantly strengthen my sampling.

All the participants were made aware that their identity might be obvious to anyone who knew their circumstances, as many PSWs occupy unique contexts. I undertook, nevertheless, to do all I could to preserve their anonymity. In some cases, they indicated where something they had said could only be used in a very general way, because it was particularly sensitive, or because there was a risk of identifying a third party. To preserve anonymity as far as possible, I only summarise participant information in this thesis, and do not attribute quoted remarks or information to individuals.

The three graphs in Figure 3 show the gender and age distribution of the 28 participants, and the decade in which their priestly ordination took place (as is customary with C of E priests, all were ordained deacon the previous year).

**Figure 3: Demographic data**



Whereas in the 2017 C of E statistics, 51% of the 3,060 licensed SSMs were female (Ministry Division, 2018, p. 33), in my sample 11 are female, compared with 17 male. The age profile of my sample is, however, is very similar to that of the national data (p. 34). Dates of ordination are not provided in the national statistics, so I cannot compare my sample data with national data on length of time in ministry. I did not ask for information about location in the questionnaire, but those who did provide such information were based across east, south, south-west, midland, and north-west areas of England, plus one as noted from Wales.

I did ask about secular work, past and present, in the questionnaire. Participants were working, or had worked, in large, national institutions, in large and small businesses, in manufacturing industry, and in the education, service and charity sectors; in career development, conflict mediation and resolution, counselling, education and training, funeral services, information technology, insurance, the NHS, politics (national and local), and social services. They were administrators and bureaucrats, consultants, counsellors, engineers, entrepreneurs, health and safety officers, lecturers, managers, medical workers, negotiators and mediators (including trades unions), researchers, safeguarding officers, and teachers. Some worked full-time in secular employment, some were retired from paid employment, but were still involved either freelance or with only expenses paid; some worked part-time in secular work and part-time in paid work for the church. Some had only been PSWs, some had been both full-time stipendiary priests (FTSs) and PSWs at different times.

### **3.2 The co-operative inquiry group**

As noted in chapter 1 and in section 2.3, my research originated in my personal desire to explore and articulate my own self-understanding, and that of others like me – priests who view our secular work as valuable in itself, not simply as a focus for ministry or a means of supporting our church ministry financially. When deciding on my research method, it was important to me that I work with my peers as co-researchers, rather than treating them as passive objects for me to study. In part, this was a way of acknowledging my own position as an insider, not a disinterested observer, but it was also about respecting and acknowledging the gift with which participants were entrusting me. I also hoped that it would enable me to hear and represent the diversity of our experience: I was concerned that there was a danger that I would only hear parts of the story with which I agreed if I did not make myself as fully accountable to my participants as possible.

Heron and Reason have written extensively on their experience with co-operative inquiry groups (CIGs) (eg. Heron, 1996; Heron and Reason, 2001, 2008) defining “[c]o-operative inquiry ... [as] a form of second-person action research in which all participants work together in an inquiry group as co-researchers and as co-subjects”. It is thus “not research on people or about people, but research with people” (Heron and Reason, 2008, p. 366). Such groups generally involve a small number of people who meet together over a period of time, and so can establish trust and empathy and respectful disagreement. Group members are equal in status, with the person(s) who called the group into being accorded no more authority on how the group operates than anyone else in it. Emphasis is given to equality and mutuality, and members have to

discipline themselves to listen carefully to each other without interrupting. Data is often in the form of stories which the members of the group use to make sense of their experience, although it may also involve non-verbal forms of communication. Heron and Reason (2001, p. 179) claimed that it provides a way of understanding a phenomenon through developing “new and creative ways of looking at things”, and then acting to transform the phenomenon for the better.

Heron (1996, p. 39) described launching an inquiry group through a call for co-researchers to join a broadly stated inquiry – broadly stated because it is important that the group can decide how the process will operate, what the primary data will consist of, and the method through which data will be obtained. I launched my CIG by sending an email to all members of clergy in my own diocese, asking anyone who felt that the labels MSE or PSE<sup>11</sup> applied to them to contact me if they would be interested in taking part in a small group to discuss our understanding of ourselves and our vocation. Three female colleagues responded, one of whom I already knew fairly well, and one of whom I knew slightly – these two had worked together in the past, so already knew each other better than I knew either. The third I had met once at a meeting, but the other two had no prior knowledge of her. We met together four times during the period March to May 2016 in the study of the most geographically central participant.

We started by setting ground rules, agreeing that what we discussed was to be private but not secret, meaning that if we talked about it outside the group, nothing would be attributed, and it would be couched in sufficiently vague terms not to identify any individual. We further agreed that it was important that each of us took responsibility for our own emotional safety, saying if we wanted something to be off the record, or a line of discussion closed down. To ensure the privacy and emotional safety of all of us, the group suggested that the data from the group would be my notes on what was said, so that I was sharing my learning and reflection, rather than recounting anyone’s words or story verbatim. They agreed that I could record the sessions, to enable me to produce notes from the recordings which I would then submit to them for comment.

In the first session, we talked about our life stories – how and why we had reached the point at which we currently found ourselves, and why we had chosen to be involved in this research. Towards the end of that session, we agreed two significant questions from my own journey to this point to motivate our discussion in the second

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<sup>11</sup> As discussed in section 1.3, my use of the term PSW came much later.

session: 'who am I?', 'what am I for?'. These two questions took us deeper into our personal stories, as we made connections between events in our histories, and our sense of calling to both ordained ministry and our secular work. It became very clear in these sessions that each of us felt we had one vocation, actualised in different ways, not two (or more). For one of us, priestly ministry preceded secular work by some considerable time, whereas the reverse was true for the others, although the seeds of priestly ministry were present much earlier. In our third session, we focused on our secular work – what we do, why we do it, how it connects with our ministry. We agreed that all of us were 'task driven', that the work mattered for its own sake, and that the need to do it as well as possible was a strong motivator. Prior to the fourth session, I sent the notes I had made from the three previous sessions, written as I listened to the recording after each session, to the other three participants so that reflection on them would be the starting point for that session. A significant new theme emerged in this session, expressed in the questions: 'what is the gift that we bring, that enriches everyone's priesthood [in the C of E]?', 'what is our unique gift to the church without which the wider priesthood, and the church, would be impoverished?'.

These four sessions provided the groundwork on which the interview process was based. Once that process was complete, I sent the transcripts of the six debrief interviews to the CIG. Three of us were able to convene again (the fourth had moved right away from the area) to discuss them, and again I recorded our discussion and wrote notes from the recording.

### **3.3 The revised research method**

I had originally intended to follow the CIG sessions by conducting interviews with a small number of current PSWs, and one or two who had resolved the tension of holding parish ministry with significant secular involvement by dropping one or the other. However, I realised from the CIG that it was only in the later sessions that we started to talk at depth, and that a single interview would therefore be inadequate. Because qualitative research is inductive, letting the data speak rather than using it to confirm or reject a preconceived model or hypothesis (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984, p. 5), research design must be flexible, and so I decided to test a revised research strategy with a friend, Sarah<sup>12</sup>. She was an SSM who at that time worked in ministerial training as well as in a parish so not strictly a PSW, since her non-parish

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<sup>12</sup> This is not her real name, for obvious reasons of confidentiality.



work required her to be an ordained priest, and hence did not fit my criterion regarding secular work, but as all I wanted to do was to test the method for robustness, and to see if it had the capacity to provide the quality of data I wanted, that was irrelevant. It preceded gaining ethical clearance, because I needed to finalise the process before I could go back to the ethical committee for approval, and so Sarah and I agreed that I could record both her interviews, but that I would not use any of the content other than that relating to the process. She is not included in the participants' information discussed above, and nothing she said is used here except in so far as it informs the questionnaire and interview process I devised.

Sarah first tested the draft online questionnaire to see if the questions were clear and unambiguous, and to ensure that it provided the data that I needed. All the questions required answers, but all had a 'no comment' option available. Initial questions asked for basic information about gender, age and length of service in ordained ministry. Sarah was then asked to describe her experience as a PSW, to indicate the greatest joys in that experience, and any downsides or areas of tension. This led into a question inviting her to describe a key event or (part) day which encapsulated her as a PSW, and the final question asked what a day off looked like for her. We then met on neutral ground to test the interview process: an initial session on her workplace and parish context, in which I took brief written notes, then lunch where conversation was general and not recorded in any way. After lunch, I recorded in full our interview of about 75 minutes, which used her responses to the questionnaire as prompts.

Subsequently I wrote up my notes, and then prepared an 'I-narrative' of the recorded interview, which is a list of all the sentences and phrases beginning "I ..." (Mikel Brown and Gilligan, 1992; Edwards and Weller, 2012). I sent the notes and 'I-narrative' to Sarah for her to check for accuracy, and to reflect on as a preparation for the second interview, which took place by phone about a week later. In that phone conversation, after some discussion of the 'I-narrative', we then focused on the process, and Sarah's reactions to it. She had found the online form straight-forward and quick to complete, commenting that she had appreciated my prefacing it with a brief biography and photo, so that she felt she was engaging with an equal. Talking about the questionnaire and interview day as a whole, she said that she had found them extraordinarily helpful as a tool for reflection on her current situation and previous experience, but the reflective process had stirred up feelings she had been suppressing, and she had needed to find appropriate people with whom she could talk further.

Because of this, I decided that the Participant Information Form, which was sent to all interviewees prior to their participation, should include the name of an appropriate

person who would be available to support an interviewee if necessary. Given Sarah's comments, I initially felt that the second interview ought to be in person, but that proved impractical because none of my interviewees lived particularly close to me. Fortunately, all said that the process was interesting and helpful, and none of them found it at all distressing or destabilising: I think this was because I approached them all as a colleague and they did not go into areas which would have been personally problematic, whereas Sarah was a good friend, in a difficult situation which I already knew about. Summarising, Sarah and I agreed that the whole process had taken us into areas we would not have anticipated, and that spending so much time was justified in terms of ensuring the quality and depth of the data.

I then sought and received ethical permission for the revised research method. The online questionnaire was a means of collecting demographic information and some indication of the respondent's life as a PSW, ending with an invitation to take part in the interview process. From those who provided contact details, and then responded to my invitation to further participation, I selected five who had current or very recent experience as a PSW, were in a location I could access given my own time constraints, and were able to offer a mutually convenient date. The sixth interviewee, as already noted, was recruited through a mutual acquaintance.

### ***The online questionnaire***

I had discussed the possibility of using an online questionnaire to recruit interviewees in the CIG, and had asked Sarah to test it for ease of use and any ambiguity in the questions. The final version, which can be seen in Appendix 1, was created using Google Forms, and consisted of five sections: 'Introduction', 'About me', 'About this research', 'You and your context', and 'The interview stage'. The first three sections were to ensure respondents understood the purpose of the research, and to provide them with information about me; questions for respondents to answer came under 'You and your context'; lastly was 'The interview stage', with a response box below an invitation to take part in the interviews.

In 'You and your context, the first three questions asked for basic demographic data (age, gender, and date of ordination as priest). Question 4 invited respondents to describe briefly their experience as an M/PSE, indicating whether this experience was current or past, its duration, and roughly what proportion of time was spent in secular work and in ministry, as far as these could be separated. Question 5 asked respondents what their greatest joys were as an M/PSE, and question 6 asked about the downsides or areas of tension. Question 7 asked for a description of a key event or (part) day "which encapsulates you as an MSE/PSE", which could be written there

and then or emailed in an audio-diary. The question concluded: "If you agree to participate in the interview process, there will be an opportunity to talk about this in more depth". The final question asked what a day off looked like for the respondent.

### ***The interview process***

In a phenomenological research interview (cf. Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, pp. 27-38), the researcher seeks to understand the interviewee's description and interpretation of their experience, in order to describe it from the interviewee's perspective. Brinkmann and Kvale use words like 'empathy' and 'nuanced' to describe such an interview and its subsequent depiction (pp. 33-35), and require the researcher to be quite consciously naïve, open to new and unexpected directions, and to be aware that knowledge will be constructed in the dialogue, knowledge which may well be new to both parties. They advocate open questions on the topic of the research rather than a totally open conversation or a directed one: the researcher chooses the themes for discussion, but not how they are explored, following the interviewee's lead once a topic has been initiated. This was the style of interview I planned for my research.

All six interviews were held between March and September 2017, five on weekdays, the sixth on a Saturday as that suited the interviewee better. The invitation, provided through the online questionnaire, was for "if appropriate, a morning (or other similar period) in which I can accompany you as you go about your daily life". It became clear from responses to the questionnaire that this would not work because either a respondent's secular work involved other people, for whom my presence would be inappropriate, or because they were likely to be sat at a desk in front of a computer. When I negotiated the detail of the interview days with prospective participants, I therefore suggested we discussed the participant's context and working life in the morning, followed by lunch together (a time when we could simply relax, enjoy one another's company and relate to each other as peers).

The first interview day set a pattern which I then followed for the next four also: in the morning, the contextual discussion lasted for about an hour and a half during which I took brief notes. These discussions included significant milestones in the interviewees' lives, and often considerable personal detail, as well as their professional and ministerial contexts. After lunch, I recorded an interview lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. Given the time already spent together, beyond reminding interviewees that they had the right to stop at any point, or to request that any or all of their data be deleted, there was no need for preliminaries. For the sixth interview, to avoid taking up too much of the time the interviewee could offer on a day

off, and because I needed to get home to prepare for leading worship the following morning, we skipped lunch, instead taking a short break in the garden with the interviewee's partner, and then continued with the recorded interview.

In the recorded interviews, I initiated discussion with two or three pre-selected interesting comments from their questionnaire responses, and then followed that up with anything that had felt particularly significant in the conversations earlier in the day. I then used the same three questions for each interviewee, which I hoped would open up new areas of discussion: 'what gets you up in the morning?', 'what makes you despair?' and 'what are you hungry for?'. The final stage of the interview was to ask if there was anything else that the person felt was significant which we had not touched on thus far. We concluded by arranging the follow-up interview.

Following each interview day, I wrote up the notes from the morning, and prepared an 'I-narrative' of the afternoon's recording. The notes and 'I-narrative' were sent out to each interviewee in time for them to reflect on them prior to our follow up conversation. Sarah had found that the 'I-narrative' worked well as a tool for such reflection, but I did not feel it had further use beyond that, so I was able to assure the interviewees that if they felt it distorted or omitted aspects of what they had said, it would not matter provided they alerted me to that, or to anything they felt I had misunderstood.

The second interviews started with discussion of any corrections that the interviewee wished to make, and anything they wanted removed from the record, or dealt with in very general terms. I then asked them what struck them particularly as they read through the 'I-narrative': all said they must have talked about themselves a lot, because there were so many 'I's! I was able to reassure them that not only had I given them only the statements or questions beginning with 'I', but I had also invited them to talk about themselves – and indeed, the interview would have not provided what I wanted from it, had that not been the case. What followed then proved the worth of this interview process: the interviewees each identified one or two really significant aspects of our discussions, and talked further in greater depth. I also asked about their self-understanding as an M/PSE. About 30 to 40 minutes was generally sufficient, and I finished simply by asking if there was anything else that felt significant that they wanted to talk about, or whether they felt there were any omissions that mattered, which we then covered as appropriate.

### **3.4 Research ethics: the CIG and interviews**

Ethical approval from Anglia Ruskin University was sought in March 2015 for the original research method, and again in October 2016 for the revised process. Approval was granted in 2015 for the CIG and for a set of semi-structured single interviews, and in 2016 was extended to include the online questionnaire, and the interview process detailed above.

I provided all participants in the CIG and the interviews with Participant Information Forms (Appendix 3) and Participant Consent Forms (Appendix 4). These included the contribution the participant would be asked to make; how data would be collected and recorded, as far as I knew that in advance; and how confidentiality would be handled. They also stated the right of any participant to drop out at any stage, or to request that any part, including the whole, of their data was not used. All participants were made aware that although I would do all in my power to ensure that they remained anonymous, nevertheless the possibility that they might be recognised could not be excluded.

In the CIG, it was important that at the start we identified working rules to ensure that our sessions provided a safe space in which we all felt free to offer very personal anecdotes and feelings: there were occasions when a participant talked about experiences which had been hurtful, either to the participant or to another, and we needed to listen and respond sensitively to one another at such times. It was also important to clarify what the data would be that the group produced, to protect not only participants' identities, but also to respect the need for emotional and spiritual safety. We therefore agreed that I would only report directly my own reactions to and interpretation of what was said. For that reason, I prepared notes as I listened to the recordings, rather than a transcript.

For me, there was an additional initial advantage in that it was far quicker for me to write notes as I listened to the recordings than it would have been to prepare full transcripts. I have not revisited the recordings, apart from a 15-minute segment of the final CIG session which I noted was "particularly rich". I listened to this again during analysis to ensure that I had not missed anything substantive when I made my original notes. I do not feel this was against the spirit of our agreement, because I have not directly quoted anything said by a CIG participant, but, as agreed, have worked only with my own reflections as I listened.

Interviewees were informed in advance, on the interview day, and at the close of the second interview, that they could request their data not be used, either in part or full. They were also reminded that I could not guarantee their anonymity, although I would

do all I could to protect their identities. As part of my analysis, I prepared a brief summary that I hoped encapsulated their sense of themselves as a PSW, and sent this to each of them. Three agreed it without change, three altered what I had put slightly, but without changing the overall sense of it: the final versions are included in section 4.3. That provided useful confirmation that I was presenting their self-understandings accurately, and that I was not misinterpreting them in a way which would negate the consent that they had given me.

### **3.5 Evaluating the research method**

#### ***Evaluating the CIG***

For the initial four sessions, there were four of us in the CIG; in the final session, which took place after the interviews, we were only three. This was unfortunate; but although the fourth person, having moved to an entirely different part of the country, was invited to take part by Skype, she did not respond.

My CIG notes for the initial four sessions represent about six hours of discussion between four PSWs with varied CVs and lengths of service in both church and secular roles. I suggested we meet four times at the outset, because I felt that busy people were more likely to stay involved if they could see clearly the limits on what they were being asked to do. Looking back over the data from these sessions, it is by no means clear to me that further meetings at this stage would have produced more or better data: there was already some repetition, and I felt that the participants had offered what they could of their own experience, and without having the commitment to, and ownership of, the process that I had, were ready to hand it back to me. Heron and Reason (2001) emphasised that one of the tasks of the initiating researcher is to ensure that a CIG is truly co-operative, which I tried to do, but in the end, unless the CIG is composed of a group who all have a direct stake in the outcome of the research, it is the initiating researcher who will take it forward and report on it, which must influence the degree to which others can or will take ownership. Although in a CIG, each person is deemed to be a co-researcher, in our case it was always clear that I was the initiator of the group, and that I would be the person working on the data and ultimately reporting on it. As co-researchers, the CIG decided how the CIG itself would function, what questions it would consider, and what its data would be. The subsequent interview process was decided in the CIG, and it then reflected on the data from the follow-up interviews. At both the initial and final stages of the CIG, participants contributed to the formulation of the research question.

Heron's and Reason's groups moved through cycles of four phases, with reflection and action part of each cycle (Heron and Reason, 2001). Phase 1 is the formation of the group, with the group deciding on their focus and the questions they wish to explore, how that exploration will proceed, and what the data will look like. In phase 2, the group collects their data, using it to dig deep into their own experience. Phase 3 is where transformation takes place, when the group breaks through to new understanding through deep immersion in the process and the data. The group may lose its way at this stage, losing sight of the original motivation for the research, or it may find ways to develop the original research design in unexpected ways. Phase 4 is a time of reflection in which the inquiry is modified through the experience of phases 2 and 3, when the original questions and methods of data collection are revisited, perhaps reframed, ready for the group to go through the cycle again. The process is both reflection, in phases 1 and 4, and action, in phases 2 and 3.

The first session of our CIG corresponded to Heron's and Reason's phase 1. Their phase 2 is the data collection, and this was the main focus for the next two sessions. In the fourth session, through reflection on the previous notes, we explored our stories more deeply. Initially, I felt that in this session we were still in phase 2, and feared that perhaps I would have to accept that my CIG was not much more than a focus group. However, reading through the notes from the fourth session in preparation for the final session a year and a half later, I realised that in fact we had broken through to new understanding, and my redesign of the interview process derived from that. Discovering the power of reflecting on the previous sessions in the fourth session was one of the triggers which prompted development of the interview phase from a simple interview to the more complex process that it eventually became. I therefore feel it is justifiable to see the fourth session as representing Heron's and Reason's phases 3 and 4.

In the final CIG session, after the interview phase, the CIG acted as a research team, initiating analysis through reflecting on a sample from the interview data. This sample was the transcripts of the second, follow-up interviews, in which the interviewees were themselves reflecting on their data from their interview days, identifying significant themes. In the CIG session, we looked at commonalities across the data and at themes which struck us as particularly interesting, leading us to articulate further themes and questions. This session was very rich, and it is therefore not surprising that the research question evolved significantly during it. As already described (section 1.3), I had formulated a working research question prior to calling the CIG into being, which I used to introduce the research to them, but I always intended that the research question should evolve through the work of the CIG, both

prior to the interviews and afterwards. Two variants on a question which proved particularly important both to the evolution of the research question, and also to the analysis of the data were:

What is the gift that we, as PSEs, bring that enriches everyone's priesthood?

What is our unique gift to the church without which the wider priesthood and the church, would be impoverished?

In this final session, we moved through a second full cycle of Heron's and Reason's four phases. First, the group reformed after a gap of more than a year, and with one member less, so repeating phase 1. As with the previous CIG sessions, I recorded our conversation, and then wrote notes from the recording, so repeating phase 2, data collection. Towards the end of the session, corresponding to phases 3 and 4, was a period which in my notes I have labelled as "really rich and important", in which we discussed difference and tension as a gift, which may lead to conflict, but which does not need to be destructive, and can be the means by which the Holy Spirit enables growth.

Although the CIG has not been involved in the rest of the research process – analysing the data in full and writing it up – nevertheless, together we worked as a research team up to that point, and were far more than a focus group. I therefore feel that the label of 'co-operative inquiry group' is justified, while admitting that its involvement in the research process was inevitably partial.

### ***Evaluating the interview process***

Questions which need to be asked about a phenomenological method of interviewing include whether it is, in fact, phenomenological, and the extent to which the way in which the interviews were carried out provided rich and authentic data. There also needs to be an appropriate relationship between the interview process and the subsequent analysis of the data.

Of the six interviewees, two were women, four were men; four were aged 60-69, one was aged 50-59 and one 40-49. Two were ordained priest in the 1980s, one in the 1990s, one in the 2000s, and two in 2010 or later. This reflects the demographic data (section 3.1) for all the participants reasonably well, apart from ordination date, since the 1980s are over-represented compared to the 2000s. Five of the six were licensed to parishes in the C of E, and one to parishes in the Church in Wales, but it is hard to see that this detracts from the data in any way, since nothing that was discussed was particular to either, and as already noted, ministry is interchangeable between the two provinces (section 3.1).



The revised interview process meant that I spent some four or five hours with each interviewee on the day we spent together, followed by about 30-40 minutes in the follow-up phone call. This allowed us to get to know each other as we talked about context and history, with the chance to relax during a welcome break between the morning fact-finding sessions, and the in-depth afternoon interviews. I do not doubt that this time spent together contributed significantly to the quality of the afternoon interviews. Sending the interviewees the notes from the morning, and the 'I-narratives' from the afternoon, provided them with an *aide-mémoire* on which to reflect prior to the second interview, and in every case ensured that they came to that interview ready to focus on what they felt was significant from the first interview.

Mikel Brown and Gilligan (1992, p. 15) used 'I-narratives' as a way of ensuring that the voices of vulnerable adolescent girls were heard, after they realised that their experimental design was causing the girls to hide their true feelings, despite indicating that they had more to say. Following them, Edwards' and Weller's (2012, p. 203) use of 'I-poems' was intended to help in tracing "how participants represent themselves in interviews through attention to first person statements". In both pieces of research, the method involved four readings of an interview transcript, first looking at the overall story, then focusing on how participants speak about themselves, thirdly looking at relationships between the participants and others, and fourthly looking at "specific cultural and political contexts and social economic structures in which the interviewee is located, and which shape their sense of self" (Edwards and Weller, 2012, p. 205). As Edwards and Weller acknowledged, this works well with a small number of scripts; it would have been onerous in the extreme with the volume of data I had from my six double interviews. However, I wanted my interviewees to be reminded of the essentials of their first interviews and to focus on what struck them as significant a week or two later. The 'I-narratives' enabled them to recall the overall outline of what they had said, but without the distraction of detail or threads which were less personal. They also removed my contributions from the interviews, which had the benefit of ensuring that it was their own thoughts, not my prompting or interpretation, on which they reflected.

In answering the question as to whether my interview process was phenomenological, I use the description given by Brinkman and Kvale (2015), that a phenomenological methodology presupposes a "semistructured life world interview" which "attempts to understand themes of the lived everyday world from the subjects' own perspectives" (p. 31). By "life world", they meant "the world as it is encountered in everyday life and given in direct and immediate experience, independent of and prior to explanations" (p. 32). The interviewer is required to exercise a "deliberate

naïveté” so that they are open to new and unexpected concepts, rather than having a preconceived set of constructs: this is the ‘bracketing’ stage of phenomenology (cf. p. 34). They therefore recommended relevant open questions, in which the interviewer determines the themes which will be discussed, but not how they are explored.

Where there is ambiguity, the interviewer is to seek clarification, whilst not being surprised by inherent contradictions (p. 34). They characterised such an interview as an interpersonal situation, in which both participants may find transformation through learning new things about themselves and their situations. It is thus an “inter-view where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between two people”, and a different interviewer would find different knowledge constructed through a different interaction (p. 35). This describes well the way in which I conducted my interviews, and I thus conclude that the process was phenomenological.

The process described above is one in which knowledge is constructed in and through the interview itself; a different interviewer, or indeed the same interviewer on a different occasion, would conduct the interview differently, leading to a different construction of knowledge. However, suggesting that therefore the picture of the PSW which emerges from my interviews is inauthentic, or fails to describe essential features of the PSW, would be to deny the agency of the interviewees. I used their own words from their questionnaire responses to initiate some of our discussions, and the questions which followed asked them to reflect directly on their own self-understanding and experience. The second interview, following a week to ten days after the first, provided a means by which the interviewees could correct any misunderstanding or misinterpretation in the notes sent to them. The gap in time gave them an opportunity to reflect on what they had said, so that they could also correct anything they had said to me which they had come to feel was not precisely what they wanted to say. I therefore feel that the interview process was sufficiently robust to enable the construction of phenomenological data, which was both rich and authentic.

The final criterion by which I evaluate the interview process concerns the relationship between the data obtained and its subsequent analysis. In analysing the data, the first stage is the transcription of it. While a written transcript does not contain all the information that a recording does, and an audio recording loses much of the non-verbal content of the interview, I was able to listen again to the recordings during analysis, particularly where I needed to ensure that the transcription rendered accurately what the person had said. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 216) recommended that analysis is planned before any interviews take place: I always intended that my analysis would consist of locating themes and then finding patterns

in those themes, so I do not think it detracts from the process that I decided on the use of IPA only after the interviews were complete. They suggested (pp. 234-235) that a phenomenological analysis consists of a careful reading of the interview to get a sense of the whole, followed by the identification of “natural meaning units”, which are then reduced as simply as possible into themes. The themes are then inspected from the perspective of the study as a whole, with those that are redundant removed. As will be shown in section 4.3, this is very much the way in which I proceeded with the IPA.



## 4 Data and Analysis

The data for this research consists of the 24 questionnaire responses which were deemed valid (section 3.3), the notes written as I listened to the five CIG session recordings, the notes and transcripts from the six interview days, and the transcripts from the six follow-up interviews. In addition, where appropriate, I include data for myself, as I consider myself to be a participant also.

Based on my chosen approach of phenomenology, I decided that Interpretative Phenomenological

Analysis (IPA) would be a suitable method of analysis. As well as fitting into the methodological framework I have chosen, it also had the merit of allowing me to include my own reflections quite deliberately, provided I was clear what was my interviewees' interpretation of their experience, and what was mine. It also ensured that there was a logical basis to the way in which I performed the analysis, an important factor, given that I felt that my first attempt at analysis, using a simple coding method, was not sufficiently robust.

### Glossary

CIG	Co-operative inquiry group
FTS	Full-time stipendiary (priest)
IPA	Interpretative phenomenological analysis
M/PSE	Minister/ministry/priest in secular employment
PSW	Priest in secular work
SSM	Self-supporting minister/ministry

### 4.1 The questionnaires

The demographic data (answers to questions 1 to 3) have already been included in the description of the participants in section 3.1, so what follows is a discussion of the remainder of the data from the questionnaires. The complete questionnaire is given in Appendix 1, and my own responses form Appendix 2.

The questions asked in the online questionnaire were:

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
3. When were you ordained priest?
4. Describe briefly your experience as MSE/PSE. Please include whether this is current or past experience (indicate how long ago and over what period of time), the context of your ministry(ies) including any licensed ministry, the context of your secular work, and the rough proportions of time spent in secular work and in ministry, as far as these can be separated.
5. What are the greatest joys for you in being an MSE/PSE?
6. What are the downsides or areas of tension?

7. Please describe (as briefly or in as much detail as you wish) a key event or (part) day which encapsulates you as an MSE/PSE. If you prefer, you could email me an audio diary [email address provided]. If you agree to participate in the interview process, there will be an opportunity to talk about this in more depth.
8. What does a day off look like for you?

Responses to question 4 were varied in both content and length, but an overall pattern is discernible. Almost all felt they were specifically called to engage in a ministry which was as much focused on their secular engagement outside the institutional church as on ministry in the church. Some commented on how much their experience in the secular world contributed to their church-based ministry; others talked of being able to explain the church to secular colleagues. Several respondents emphasised their workload, with two giving at least 40 hours a week to their secular employment, and then another 15 hours or so to their parish duties.

Some respondents found joy (question 5) in being able to integrate completely their faith and working lives, so that they found it hard to untangle what was secular and what was not. Others felt they were outside the institutional church, and so could, on the one hand, speak prophetically to the church, and, on the other, decode the church for people outside it. Some respondents wrote about linking the church and the world, helping others to meet God where they are, while others wrote about how they would look for God at work in the workplace. Some experienced ordination as permission-giving, enabling them to speak for the church to give it credibility and to challenge perceptions. A few mentioned not having ultimate responsibility for congregations, and having the flexibility to respond to people's needs as required. Several commented on how much their secular work and experience contributed to their ministry, and *vice versa*.

Answering question 6, concerning areas of difficulty or tension, respondents talked of issues in finding suitable ways to "offload", and the lack of understanding shown by FTSs and diocesan personnel. Time was mentioned repeatedly, and in particular the difficulty in balancing commitments, including to family. For some this resulted in their feeling exhausted, torn between competing responsibilities. Isolation was another issue, either because meetings meant to provide support were arranged during the working day, or because FTSs, including incumbents, failed to show understanding of the PSW's situation. Some respondents mentioned being disparaged by FTSs, being treated as an amateur or a "hobby priest", because they were not full-time in the parish.

Question 7 asked about a typical day, and some respondents described days full of activity, both outside the church and inside it. Others described a particular encounter in which they had provided affirmation or a caring, listening ear to someone: “[t]hey wouldn’t formally ask for an appointment, but seem to clutch at the opportunity to discuss things that are troubling them”. One person wrote about taking their skill in sign language into worship; another described how his experience of the church’s methods for discerning vocation had been helpful in workshops he led on career choice and making important life decisions.

The question about a day off (number 8) was treated with some derision: “a theoretical concept”, “a beautiful theory”! Some respondents had found ways to ensure that they enjoyed time relaxing away from their secular work, the parish, and chores, but many commented that either there was no day in the week when they were not working, or that, if there were, it would be used for housework and shopping. One or two did comment that the balance between their secular work and church ministry was energising, or that doing all that they did was a choice they made freely, and for one the fact that every day was different helped. One wrote “[c]hocolate in the evening!”.

There are themes emerging from this data which are also present in the CIG and interview data, so will be considered at greater length in later chapters. At this point, it is worth commenting, however, that although, as already noted, there was considerable variety in all that the PSWs were doing, there was considerable similarity in the joys and tensions mentioned.

## **4.2 Analytic method: Interpretative phenomenological analysis**

As discussed in section 2.2, phenomenological research is a means by which the researcher attempts to get inside the experience of others. IPA (introduced in section 2.3) is one tool that may be used for this purpose. Jonathan Smith, a psychologist, first articulated IPA as an “approach to experiential qualitative psychology in the mid 1990s” claiming that it is “phenomenological in being concerned with participants’ lived experience and hermeneutic because it considers that experience is only accessible through a process of interpretation on the part of both participant and researcher” (Smith, 2010, p. 186).

Smith and Osborn (2007, p. 55) described a method which includes a broadly-based research question, semi-structured interviews of a small number of participants, followed by detailed case-by-case analysis of transcripts. In the interviews, it is more

important to follow the participant's lead, than to stick to a prepared set of questions, and a sense of rapport between interviewer and interviewee is thus crucial, enabling the interviewee to take the lead, and the interviewer to stay with them as they explore what is interesting and has meaning for them (p 58). The analysis does not involve frequency analysis, but is about reporting the meaning participants give to their experience, then reflecting on that meaning for a particular participant, and then on complexity of meaning across the interviews (p. 66).

The process is iterative, involving deep interaction between the researcher and the data, with the analysis proceeding case by case, so that each is considered independently first. This is part of the bracketing: each person's data is allowed to tell its own story in the first instance. The two-stage hermeneutic is not so much about two stages in the analysis, as in presenting the analysis at two different levels. The first level is essentially empathetic, in which the researcher presents the interviewee's interpretation of the phenomenon (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p. 36). The second level is a hermeneutic of questioning, in which the researcher is situated alongside the interviewee, asking questions which illuminate the experience further (p. 36). These are not questions asked during an interview, but questions which the researcher deems significant when reviewing the data, which are answered using the data: IPA requires "a reading from *within* the terms of the text" (p. 37, original italics).

### 4.3 Analytic method in practice: the interview data

Smith and Osborn acknowledged that there is no single definitive way to do IPA (Smith and Osborn, 2007, p. 54; Smith and Osborn, 2015, pp. 25, 39, 40-51), but nevertheless suggested a protocol which I therefore followed. The first step is to note anything interesting or significant in one margin, and in the other margin any emerging themes. This is illustrated in Table 1: in the centre are interview excerpts; to the left are my notes on them; on the right, are the emerging themes. 'Character' was a theme which failed to emerge to any great extent, so was dropped, whereas 'ontology' and 'priesthood' contributed to the superordinate themes (discussed in the next section) of 'PSW vocation', 'why be ordained?', 'theology of priesthood' and 'identity'.



**Table 1: IPA example**

<b>Notes</b>	<b>Excerpt from interview</b>	<b>Emerging themes</b>
Keeps a foot in the local church because he is a priest, it's ontological	Because it's who I am, and it comes back to this ontological question: this is what I gave myself to be. In 1979 I said – or '80 I was priested – and I can't erase that from my character, if I can put it like that. It's the chara-... Are you familiar with Alasdair MacIntyre's work on character?	Ontology Priesthood Character
Needing to be a priest in school	So I think it did need a priest, and in both my high schools, I worked in one 14 years and the second one for nine years, I was asked to explain the Christian message at Christmas. And so thousands upon thousands, over the years, of people heard the Christian message at Christmas, because of that one thing that I was asked to do because I'm a priest, if nothing else.	Why be ordained?
FTS doesn't have the skillset to relate to world around them	They don't have the skillset to relate to the world around them.	Difference between FTS and PSE

Each participant's data is treated as a separate case, producing a table for each. The tables for the six interviewees can be seen in Appendix 5.

For the first three sets of case analyses, I made no attempt to relate emerging themes with those from previous participants. Smith and Osborn (2007, p. 73) indicated that it is permissible, however, to use themes from previous cases where the sample size is greater than three, and so I started to do this for the other three cases to reduce the number of labels for similar themes, all the while trying to ensure that I did not make the data fit them if it would be better to admit a new theme. At this stage, it is helpful to check back with the transcript that this accurately reflects the data, which I did, also constructing a very brief summary for each participant, which I emailed to them, to check that they felt it was an accurate representation of how they understood their experience as a PSW. Since none of the interviewees made more than minor changes to my suggested summaries, I am satisfied that this process was sufficiently robust.

**Summary 1:** You are someone whose priestly vocation keeps them active in secular life. For you, it is one vocation, to be a priest in whatever context you find yourself, to be aware of God in all of life, and of opportunities to build his kingdom. God's call to you, to be this person, gives you fulfilment and joy.

**Summary 2:** Your call to priestly ministry arose in your secular workplace, and you always felt that your vocation would keep you on the edge of the church, and the diocesan structures. You feel that your authority as a priest comes from the Trinity, not from the church institution or hierarchy. For you, being ordained priest was a real fulfilment of who you are, but that you would work it out through your involvement in education and in the secular world generally, as well as through parish ministry. Being a teacher was also part of who you are, and it mattered to you that you helped your students to achieve as well as they could academically.

**Summary 3:** You have reflected on what it means to be a priest in secular employment over many years, and have compared it with what it means to be a priest in a parish. Being a Christian is about contemplating God, seeing him *[sic]* at work in his world, and making him explicit, not necessarily through words. Being priestly is about facing both ways – towards God and towards the world – and standing with Christ in that place. The MSE is well placed to do this because of their participation in secular work. What matters is not whether we are in secular employment or not, but that we are answering the call of God, asking us to be where he needs us.

**Summary 4:** You reflected on interactions between church and secular, and priesthood and secular work, and how Christians are enabled to live out their faith in their working lives. For you, ordination was what God called you to, but as time went on, you felt that an important part of your vocation was to focus on people at work and a theology of discipleship that embraced this. Your identity is thus to be a priest, but to be a priest who works most of the time in a secular capacity, using your God-given gifts.

**Summary 5:** For you, it is about blending ministry in church and in school, being grounded in real life, while holding the tensions inherent in having two jobs plus family responsibilities. Although it is not that many years since you were ordained, you cannot now imagine not being ordained, and you take seriously the responsibility this places on you. Your ordination impacted your teaching, but you are finding ways of teaching [specific topics] that are not at odds with your Christian faith and vocation.

**Summary 6:** For you, it's all about being open to God, 24/7. You are a priest because that's where you can best work for him [*sic*], both through your Monday-Friday work, and in your parish ministry. Everyone knows you're a priest, and wearing the clerical collar, being identifiable, is part of your evangelism.

The next step in the analysis is to look for patterns in the themes, trying to identify what matters to the participants and some indication as to why it is significant (Smith and Osborn, 2007, p. 70). From this, superordinate themes across the data are developed and tabulated (p. 74). This requires prioritising some themes ('priesthood', 'why be ordained', for instance), while dropping any which do not offer anything to the overall pattern emerging ('character', 'difference between FTS and PSW', for instance). Frequency is not on its own a criterion for selecting or dropping a theme: how rich the data is in itself, or how well it illuminates other themes, are more appropriate criteria for this type of analysis (pp. 74-75). In the case of 'character', this did not occur enough for me to take it further, although it is an interesting slant on the nature of the PSW; in the case of 'difference between FTS and PSW', it occurred frequently across the interviews, but it is the nature of the differences, which were categorised individually, that is interesting, rather than that they exist.

Table 2 summarises this stage of the analysis with examples from the interview data. These examples were chosen on the basis of selecting a quotation from each interviewee in turn, provided I had identified the particular theme in a given person's data, ensuring a range of examples across the interviewees.

**Table 2: Superordinate themes for the interview data**

<b>Superordinate theme</b>	<b>Examples from the interview data</b>
PSW vocation	<p>I think that is part of the challenge where people turn to me from my secular world of work. They don't know how church does things, but they want me to be church for them their way.</p> <p>But the thing I loved about MSE was having to make sense of it as a Christian vocation, as a seeking of God in God's world, as a seeking of the resurrection of Christ in God's world, in settings that were non-religious, by and large.</p>
Church/secular interface	<p>... that is about – that is specifically about bringing secular things into church, or into prayer. But it works both ways: you are very much a two-way, you're a dual carriageway and things go both ways.</p> <p>I had my presentation and it was all prepared and I knew what I was going to say, and when it was my turn I stood up and heard myself saying, 'Once upon a time there was a man called Jonah ...'. And I do not know where that came from, it just came out, and the [secular context] audience, many of whom were steeped in some fairly fundamental religion, knew exactly where I was coming from. And somehow or other it just – it resonated with them, probably more than any other way I could have opened.</p>
Holding the tension	<p>...although I've got much better at saying, no, I can't do that here, and I need to do that there. I think that it's – part of it is, it's easy to feel a jack of all trades and master of none, that you do two half jobs badly, rather than the one job well.</p> <p>...when we went through the redundancies and the possible closures, I had – I prayed, because I said to God how am I going to cope with this?</p>
Work matters	<p>...this man came up to me and he said, 'I'm in the Merchant Navy now, because of you', he said, 'You were so strict, and you made me work and I got that B, and without it I'd have never been able to do what I always wanted'.</p> <p>Okay, I'm a bureaucrat. My previous line manager said to me in one of my annual appraisals, 'You're not going to take this as a compliment, but it is one. You are my best bureaucrat', and I said, 'That's a very back-handed compliment' and he said, 'I knew you'd say that, you didn't accept the call to be a priest in the Church of God to be a bureaucrat, but it doesn't stop you being good at it'.</p>

Superordinate theme	Examples from the interview data
Aware of God in all of life	<p>I'm talking about ordinary people being able to see and feel that everything that they do is part of vocation, in inverted commas, or building the kingdom, or service to God, or whatever particular terms you want to use for it. That the whole feeling that people put things in boxes, and church on Sunday and family is a separate box, and work Monday to Friday is another box, and they're not part of each other. It just seems to me to be so wrong.</p> <p>... a lot of people, even within the church, find it difficult to understand that one can be totally open to what God is leading them to do throughout their daily life. ... even on holiday God is still with me.</p>
Why be ordained?	<p>Well, I'm ordained because that's what I felt called to be. It is ontological for me; it's not about status in the community or status in the congregation. It's, I suppose, reduce it to the sacrament of offering up daily life for myself and for others, in the eucharist – not always at an altar – but in, so to speak, eucharistic moments when the everyday, the quotidian becomes sacred.</p> <p>And the ultimate answer is, God decided that he <i>[sic]</i> wanted me to be ordained, and he appears to have decided that he wanted me to be ordained in the context in which I was then working, and largely still function. And, well, if that's what he wanted, then ultimately that's what he got.</p>
Building the kingdom	<p>What gets me up in the morning? What gets me up is thinking that I can play my part in building God's kingdom here on earth, a bit, at the school, or in the parish and that, for me, is a huge sense of joy and achievement.</p> <p>I have always thought outside of the parish boundaries – to me, parish boundaries don't exist – they didn't exist for Christ, they didn't exist for his apostles – and it's outreach to whoever, whenever, however.</p>
Theology of priesthood	<p>...what is crucial is an MSE is not merely what some people do with their ministry, or one of many patterns of ministry. But it actually reflects a whole theological pattern for thinking about God ...</p>

Superordinate theme	Examples from the interview data
	<p>... with the wisdom of hindsight, I can see that being an ordained priest made a huge difference in all sorts of ways.</p> <p>... For myself, I think what it gave me was a confidence that I could speak with authority, and I don't mean the authority of a teacher, but that I had God, the Trinity, behind me and within me, when I was operating.</p>
Future of the church	<p>We're stuck on the physics model, which is about if you do that it will create this effect, instead of the biological model, which is why I talk about ecosystems, which is about diversity and things working together in an ecosystem. I think part of our ecosystem must be discipleship of people at work.</p> <p>I think there's a perception in the church as a whole, that they've no idea what's facing them in terms of the recruitment crisis. And therefore SSMs will become the default model anyway: one, because we can't get them through, can't get full-time clergy through, but if we could get them through, we couldn't afford to pay.</p>
Perception of PSW	<p>...if I presume that I am called to parish work sometimes, and that I and others are called to MSE sometimes, then we can't afford to play that stupid game – we're both called by God – so let's not argue ...</p> <p>I think there is certainly a residual fear from stipendiaries of SSM clergy, who, in many cases, appear to be having it all. They've got the job, they've got the money, they've got all sorts of things ...</p>
Identity	<p>I think that being a priest teacher, or teacher priest, whichever way you want to play it, is who I am; and I particularly feel that this is a role that I was born to play.</p> <p>...why anyone would want to distinguish between ontology and function I am totally perplexed about, and I think it's nonsense. So doing and being are two sides of the same coin, though being the more fundamental.</p>
Fulfilment and joy	<p>And then at my ordination, I couldn't stop grinning my head off. I was born in Cheshire – I was a Cheshire cat, I just felt filled with joy. And, by the end, my face was aching, but I couldn't stop smiling, it was just so wonderful. And that felt like an anointing, which indeed it was.</p>

Superordinate theme	Examples from the interview data
	I do feel I do get a lot of fulfilment and a great deal of joy from doing what I do ... I realised after I talked to you and you went away, and I was thinking about it later in the evening and I thought, yes, I really do ... this is really important, it is really ... I get a great deal out of doing this, and I enjoy doing it.
Parish ministry	... the sense of being committed to the parish bit, the parish way of life, which is quite distinctive, very demanding and has got some nice things to it, and some not so nice bits to it.  I've become more involved in parish ministry, because I've got more time now ...

#### 4.4 Analytic method in practice: the CIG data

Because my initial intention to use the CIG data as a lens for interpreting the interview data would have prevented my approaching the interview data with an open mind, I decided instead, once I had analysed the interview data using IPA, to do a similar exercise on the CIG data. Table 3 shows the superordinate themes I identified in the CIG data, with examples of contributing themes from my notes, and the CIG session from which they were taken. The complete list of themes for this data can be seen in Appendix 6.

**Table 3: Superordinate themes for the CIG data**

Superordinate theme	Examples	CIG session <sup>13</sup>
Bridge between church and secular world	Ministering in the world, richer	3
	PSW well placed to reflect on integration of faith and life	F
	Framing in terms of bringing in the world, but our lens is priesthood	F

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<sup>13</sup> 1-4 indicates one of the first four sessions, prior to the interviews. F indicates the final session, after the interviews.

<b>Superordinate theme</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>CIG session<sup>13</sup></b>
Relationship with the institutional church	Priesthood and ministry not confined to a part-time space	1, 2, 4
	Not part of the club, about God not the institution	2
	Greater appreciation of priesthood among secular colleagues than valuing of work skills in church context	2, 4, F
	PSWs not feeling valued	1, F
Vocation	Feeling called, but also wanting to bring something unique	4, F
	Whose choice? Ours or God's?	F
Work	Impact of professional work on ministry	2, 3
	Being good at our jobs, doing them well, really matters	3
	What is sabbath for us?	3, 4

Because the CIG data are not the session transcripts, but comprise the notes I made as I listened to the transcripts, exemplar quotations cannot be given. The relationship between this analysis and the interview analysis is summarised in Table 4.

**Table 4: Superordinate themes in the CIG and interview analysis**

<b>CIG superordinate theme</b>	<b>Corresponding interview superordinate theme</b>
Vocation	PSW vocation
	Identity
	Why be ordained?
	Fulfilment and joy
Work	Church/secular interface
	Work matters



<b>CIG superordinate theme</b>	<b>Corresponding interview superordinate theme</b>
Bridge between church and secular world	Church/secular interface
	Aware of God in all of life
	Building the kingdom
Relationship with the institutional church	Future of the church
	Perception of PSW
	Parish ministry

The first three CIG superordinate themes correspond to a significant question from the interviews:

Vocation	What does it mean to be a priest in the secular?
Work	Does it make any difference to how we do our jobs?
Bridge	How does this proclaim Christ to the world?

The fourth theme can also be rendered as a question: 'What is the role of the PSW in the church?'

These four questions are the basis of chapter 7, where I present the four PSW narratives which initiate the conceptual framework. Smith's use of IPA is essentially idiographic (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p. 181), frequently presented in the form of case studies. Because of my concern to maintain the anonymity of my participants as far as possible, I decided not to do this, but instead to present four narratives which are rooted in my data, but which are not specific to any one individual. This is the first IPA level of analysis, in that the hermeneutic is one of empathy, using the four relationships (with God, secular work, the world, and the church), which the four questions represent, as a means of describing the PSW through the words of participating PSWs.

## **4.5 Validity and critique of the analytic process**

As has been discussed, the analytic process was iterative at several levels. A first iteration, involving a thematic analysis of the CIG data, and then using this to provide a lens for the analysis of the interview data, proved to be insufficiently robust: as a method, it was open to the charge that I was choosing themes on the basis of my own prior biases. I therefore decided to use the method of IPA, analysing the interview

data, and then the CIG data, for themes, then looking for patterns in those themes from which I constructed superordinate themes. These will be presented at the first IPA level (using an empathetic hermeneutic) in chapter 7, and at the second IPA level (using a questioning hermeneutic) in chapters 8 to 10.

Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009, pp. 180-184) include a detailed discussion of how validity might be established for IPA, suggesting four broad principles which any researcher using IPA should consider. The first is that of sensitivity to context. Analysis can only be as good as the data on which it is based, and so it is very important that the interview is conducted with an appropriate level of empathy, enabling the interviewee to construct their own meaning, while at the same time ensuring that the interviewer asks questions which provide the interviewee with a stimulus to reflect at depth on their experience. In using the interview data, the researcher should include “a considerable number of verbatim extracts” which “support the argument being made, thus giving participants a voice in the project and allowing the reader to check the interpretations being made” (pp. 180-181). Such interpretations need to be made in the light of relevant literature, whether substantive (so related to the topic under discussion) or theoretical (underpinning the method). In this thesis, both theoretical and substantive literature are discussed in chapter 6, and the arguments in chapters 7 to 10 are based on verbatim excerpts from the interview transcripts.

The second principle Smith, Flowers and Larkin recommend is that of commitment and rigour. Commitment is shown in careful attention to the interviewee during the interview, and then in the care with which the analysis is carried out; rigour relates to the appropriateness of the sample, the quality of the interviews and the completeness of the analysis, which must be interpretative as well as descriptive (p. 181). “Good IPA studies tell the reader something important about the particular individual participants as well as something important about the themes they share” (p. 181): although I do not describe my participants individually, nevertheless, the reader will discover important aspects of what it means to be a PSW through their words as reported in chapters 7 to 10.

The third criterion is that of transparency and coherence. Transparency is a matter of being very clear about the stages of the research process in the final written account, including details of the participants (section 3.1), the data collection and the elements of the analytic process (this chapter and the preceding one) (p. 182). Coherence requires a logical presentation of the data, analysis and interpretation which lead into the argument made; contradictions in the data are allowed, but need to be considered carefully thereafter. The phenomenological and hermeneutic basis need to be clear.

The final criterion is that of impact and importance: does the written account tell the reader something interesting and useful.

Smith, Flowers and Larkin also advocate that all the data is filed in such a way that an independent audit could be undertaken. Such an audit would seek to establish that the case made is credible and authentic, not that it is the only possible such account (p. 183). I do not claim that my interpretation of what my participants said about their experience and understanding of being a PSW is the only possible interpretation, nor do I claim that the framework I have produced is the only viable one that the data might support; however, I do claim that I have satisfied the criteria above, using the data to create an authentic conceptualisation of the PSW which has coherence, impact, interest and significance. In principle an independent audit could be undertaken, in that all the data, and an account in my journal of the decisions I have made throughout the project, are, for the time being, stored electronically.

Having decided upon a phenomenological approach, I am happy that the method of IPA provides a robust analytical tool which is suitable for the analysis of a small number of cases where the focus is on personal experience, and that the content of chapters 7 to 10 represents an authentic interpretation of PSW experience and self-understanding. The tables presented in this chapter and in Appendix 5 and Appendix 6 provide evidence for its validity.



## 5 Curating the Analysis and Interpretation

My research question is:

How do people who are simultaneously ordained, licensed, priests in the C of E and engaged in secular work make sense of their particular vocation?

The gap in knowledge, which this research is designed to fill, is the ignorance of the experience and self-understanding of PSWs, with their commitment to a significant area of human life (secular work), which results in a deficiency, in fact if not in intention, in the C of E's doctrine and theology of ministry. It is my hope that the outcome will be a useful contribution to practice, for the church no less than for PSWs themselves. Ward argued that ecclesiology "arises from a theological situatedness in the church" (2012, p. 3), but was concerned that there is "a disconnection between what we say doctrinally about the church and the experience of life in a local parish". That disconnection, as I discuss in later chapters, is exemplified in the experience of PSWs.

The purpose of my research is threefold: to wrestle with my own self-understanding in order to achieve some kind of coherence about who and what I think I am; to articulate a shared self-understanding, based on multiple voices, for those of us for whom my designation of PSW is not only appropriate, but is symbolic of something important about our self-understanding; and to present a case to the C of E for enlarging its understanding of the nature of this particular form of priestly ministry, in the hope that it will be recognised as the significant and unique gift that it is. In order to do this, I use a process of curation of elements from the theological and ecclesial traditions, the data from my empirical fieldwork, and my own experience, to provide a rich description of the PSW set against the background of theology and the ecclesial tradition of the C of E.

At the beginning of this thesis, I contextualised my research in my own experience, and situated it as a contribution to the understanding of priestly ministry in the C of E (chapter 1). I then described the methodology which underlies the direction in which I have chosen to take my research design (chapter 2). In chapter 3, I described my research method, with the data and method of analysis following in chapter 4. The purpose of this chapter is to act as a hinge between this material and that which

### Glossary

C of E	Church of England
CIG	Co-operative inquiry group
FTS	Full-time stipendiary (priest)
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
M/PSE	Minister/priest in secular employment
PSW	Priest in secular work

follows. In it I use the analogy of curating an exhibition to describe the process through which I situate the research data in the context of relevant theological literature.

## 5.1 The process of curation

In current English, a curator is someone who chooses and places works of art or artefacts in a museum, but the word 'curator' was originally derived from the Latin *cura*, 'to take care'. Anyone in ministry in the C of E will instantly hear cognates of 'cure', as in the 'cure of souls', and 'curate'. Originally the curate was the person with whom the bishop shared the cure of souls in a parish; that person is now more generally called the incumbent, who may well be given an assistant curate to train or as a colleague. I am technically an assistant curate, although in my diocese we are generally referred to as associate priests once we have served our titles as 'curates' (meaning we have completed the phase of training which follows ordination). It has been a profoundly moving experience to be given a share in the cure of souls in my licensing services, and with this resonance in mind, it pleases me to depict my analysis and interpretation as a form of curation, recognising that it is important that I 'take care' in how I reflect on what the interviewees said, and that I 'take care' that my presentation of the data enables their authentic voices to be heard.

In an analysis of the process of effective curation, Baker (2010, p. 4) described an exhibition he had visited in which the use of film and photography created impact through "layered narratives", providing a memorable experience. He wrote that he was greatly affected by it, commenting that it was not "just that I loved some of the works of the artist. It was also the way that the art used the context of the building, and that the journey through the art, while subtle, had a wonderful flow and development to it", which derived from a careful and effective process of curation. A well-curated exhibition is a space for experience, in which people can make connections; it is participative and immersive (pp. 6-7).

Baker's primary focus was worship curation, which he saw as creating spaces "for encounter, for experience, for reflection, to change speeds, for prayer, for questions, for exploration, for meditation, for provocation, for moments of epiphany" (2010, p. 7). He acknowledged, however, that any space will not do for those of us who are part of "a tradition", and, because his context was the C of E, there were "certain rules or grammar within which to curate, with accompanying treasures to take out of the cupboard of tradition" (p. 13). Such constraints do not mean that nothing new is possible, however, nor that "business as usual in the church, in worship, in theology" therefore simply continues without challenge (p. 10).

The work of curation is about providing an opportunity for interaction between the exhibits, their creators, and the audience, while saying something worthwhile about contemporary society (Kendzulak, 2018). Curating the voices in this research, in order to answer my research question, and to provide a contribution to knowledge and to practice, requires a sound concept which has a narrative flow (cf. Baker, 2010) so that the interaction between the voices displays facets of the identity and vocation of the PSW. I have therefore focused on aspects of participants' experience and their, and my, interpretation of that experience to produce a display which is authentic, and allows for diversity, while not attempting to cover all the ground which might be possible. Curation requires selection, so that those exhibits chosen are displayed to good effect, not lost in a morass of detail.

There is a level of artifice here which could be seen as antithetical to the phenomenological method, which seeks to identify and describe 'the thing itself'. However, as I pointed out in section 2.2, 'the thing itself' is not available to us when what we are talking about is the experience of other people: all that I have access to is 'the thing as interpreted by person X on the occasion they talked to me about it'. You, the reader, do not even have access to that, since all the words written in this thesis, even when I am directly quoting from what an interviewee said to me, have been selected and placed in a context – curated – by me.

## **5.2 Listening to the voices**

This research is not simply an academic exercise. As Leach (2007, p. 22-23) argued, it is important that issues for theological reflection are not hypothetical, but arise from situations in which the researcher is personally invested, and that they are about "genuinely seeking the will of God". Leach listed five questions which she claimed are "sacramental", because they provide a means of naming and exploring issues, listening to and learning from other voices, and so seeking to hear God's voice. The five questions require the researcher to pay careful attention to the voices that are heard and those that are absent, to the wider context, to the researcher's own voice, to the theological tradition, and to the mission of the church (p. 21). The voices to which I pay attention are first and foremost my participants, PSWs, and among them my own voice. I hear our voices against a background which includes scripture and a range of theological literature, which includes the church as the eschatological body of Christ, and the church as a human institution.

The church can be seen as an institution, as the mystical body of Christ, as a sacrament, as a herald of the kingdom, and as the servant of the world (Bosch, 1991, p. 368). All of these are part of the sub-text of what follows, and are considered

further in section 6.1. In addition, as the report *Mission and Ministry* argued, the church does not *have* mission, it *is* mission (Archbishops' Council, 2007b, discussed in section 6.1, cf. Bosch, 1991). In the conceptual framework (discussed in section 5.3) I locate the PSW in the *missio Dei*, through a description of the gifts and characteristics of the PSW, as exemplified by my research participants. The theological tradition is addressed in chapter 6, and referenced in the chapters that follow as I discuss the data and my interpretation of it. Aspects of the wider context were discussed in section 1.1, and also feature in chapter 6.

As Ward (2012, p. 2) argued, “to understand the church, we should view it as being simultaneously theological and social/cultural”, and so the theology and the wider context are necessarily inter-dependent. Because the church is situated in a culture, its voice cannot be heard from any vantage point which is outside the local culture. If the church is to speak prophetically to culture as part of its *raison d’être*, then it will at times be called to account by that culture, which I would argue the church needs to accept. I see the Holy Spirit at work in all of creation, and in particular in the secular world, and, as a corollary, where necessary speaking back to the church. There needs to be a critical space in which the institutional church is subject to God speaking from outside it. In the context of this research, I therefore see no problem with using appropriate tools from other disciplines, such as IPA, to enable me to interpret my data, just as the lens through which I read scripture and theology is necessarily informed by all that I bring to that reading from my own life and experience.

Considering the relationship between the Bible/tradition and experience, as contexts for practical theology, Bennett (2013, p. 42) suggested three questions to ask: “where do you start?”, “what do you trust?”, and “what is the relationship between theory and practice?”. In this research, I have started from the experience of the PSW, first myself, and then other participants, and I have placed my trust in our honest attempts to describe how we understand ourselves. My starting point and basis are thus practice, but informed by the Bible, theology and the tradition of the church, at times as a comfortable background, at times needing to locate my understanding and interpretation in a more critical place. I hope, however, that the relationship between theory and practice, which this research embodies, is one of mutual dialogue in which both are open to change and development.

Throughout this research, my beliefs about God, the church, and the wider context in which I live, have fed into this research, forming the bedrock against which I have conceived it, and carried it out (discussed further in the next section). This has, however, been a two-way process, with my beliefs also informed and at times



challenged by the research process. On the one hand, theology, the wider context, the church and God have all impacted on my voice as it is heard in this thesis; on the other hand, my voice is heard throughout through my selection of data to present and my interpretation of it. It is heard more specifically in sections where I describe my own experience, as a way of making transparent those aspects of myself which have formed lenses for how I have heard and interpreted the other voices.

Leach's first question also asked whose voices are absent or being silenced. One such is the voice of the full-time stipendiary priest (FTS): participants frequently referred to FTSs, but at no point have I given any of them a voice. In part, this reflects a pragmatic decision about the scope of this research, setting appropriate boundaries for it; in part, however, it stems from a desire to foreground the voice of the PSW, given that a common complaint is that the FTS is deemed normative in the church (sections 1.1, 6.2 and 7.4). Other missing voices include those of my participants' secular work colleagues, and lay Christians engaged in secular work. Again for pragmatic reasons I have not taken their views into account, but it is not obvious to me that including them would have added much to the scope of this research, given its focus on the priestly identity of the PSW, as well as their involvement in secular work.

All the contributing voices are mediated through me, which is inevitable in a research project of this nature. In sections 2.4, 3.5 and 4.5, I have provided critiques of my methodology, fieldwork, analysis and interpretation, in which I consider the validity of my conclusions. The voice of the institutional church, the C of E, is present partly as mediated through the words of participants, but also through theological literature and policy documents. As discussed in section 11.2, one of the contributions to practice that I hope to make is, with others, to contribute to dialogue between the institutional church and PSWs.

### ***The voice of scripture***

In developing my conceptual framework, I use three questions from the first chapter of St John's Gospel:

"Who are you?" (John 1.19)

"What do you seek?" (John 1.38)

"Where are you staying?" (John 1.38)

The inspiration for using these three questions came from Professor David Ford, who used them as a framework for understanding John's Gospel in a study day he led for licensed ministers in my diocese, as noted in section 1.3.

These three questions provide me with a hermeneutical strategy as described by Graham, Walton and Ward (2005, pp. 78-108) in the method of canonical narrative theology, which they entitled 'Telling God's Story'. In this, gospel narratives form "the key to interpreting not only the rest of Scripture but also the unfolding events of human history" (p. 78). They argued that the "theological task is to discern how contemporary experience can be interpreted through the story that the church tells about Jesus and to identify forms of practice that are coherent with this narrative", as a way of constructing Christian identity (p. 78).

This method originated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the work of Barth, who went back to the scriptural narrative of Jesus' life to find a way to continue in faith following the horror of the First World War. He found in the gospels "a narrative that breaks in upon the natural continuum of history and is the basis upon which the events of history are to be judged and interpreted" (Graham, Walton and Ward, 2005, p. 95). For Barth, it was not what human beings were doing that was important, but "the doings of God" (Barth, 1928<sup>14</sup>, cited in Graham, Walton and Ward, 2005, p. 95).

Following Barth, Frei "argued that the scriptural narratives of Jesus contained the key to renewing the Church" (Graham, Walton and Ward, 2005, p. 79). Frei wanted the biblical narrative to be understood as narrative, pointing out a fundamental hermeneutic issue: that neither understanding the scriptures as factual and verifiable, nor as unreliable and time-conditioned, is an appropriate way for a Christian to approach them; rather the Bible needs to be understood on its own terms as narrative (Frei, 1974, p. 280). He deemed it necessary to look at the narrative shape of the gospels as a whole, and not to focus simply on extracts.

One strand of critique of these narrative approaches to scripture centres upon their perceived rejection of anything in current society as revelatory of God (Graham, Walton and Ward, 2005, p. 96). In particular, Frei's development of the method of canonical narrative theology is open to the charge that in requiring the gospel narratives to be read 'realistically', other ways of reading them, such as allegorical, prophetic or mystical readings, are marginalised, contributing to a particularly western way of reading scripture (p. 105). As Graham, Walton and Ward asked: "if the Christian

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<sup>14</sup> Barth, K., 1928. *The Word of God and the Word of Man*. Boston: Pilgrim Press.

Church is a story-formed community, who determines the way in which the story is told?” (p. 106). The gospel narratives are multi-layered, however, and can sustain many different forms of interpretation. I do not see my use of the three questions as excluding the possibility that God may speak through what my interviewees said, or my interpretation of them: indeed, my use of them as a lens has been a means through which I have been taken into prayer, in which I have felt God speaking.

While I acknowledge Frei's concern that the gospels should be read in their entirety, not used to extract proof-texts, I do not think this describes my use of the three questions. I am not using them to prove or substantiate an argument, but as a means to develop a conceptual framework for the PSW. Witherington (2009, p. 2) expressed concern that the starting point for use of a biblical extract should be the original meaning of the text so that it is not 'abused' through the hermeneutical process: again, I do not think that I have done this, rather, as I explain below, that I have used the questions in the way that the evangelist used them, as a framework.

Originally, biblical texts were “mostly surrogates for oral communication” (Witherington, 1995, p. 3), and so the opening passages of a text were crucial for enabling listeners to understand the nature of what was being presented to them (pp. 10-11). Witherington argued that the purpose of John's Gospel is to present the story of Jesus through the eyes of the Beloved Disciple (p. 4), creating a “dramatic biography written for Christians to use for evangelistic purposes”, so that they could explain “where Jesus came from and where he is going” (p. 22). The account of Jesus' meeting with John the Baptist in John 1 presents the Baptist as the first person to recognise Jesus for who he really is, and to witness to him. The priests and Levites, sent by the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem, are the foil to him in their blindness and lack of understanding (p. 65). Recognition passes from John the Baptist to Andrew and his friend. Where the synoptic gospels make use of narratives in which Jesus calls his group of disciples into being, Witherington claimed that John's account is more in the form of a quest narrative (p. 68). Andrew and his friend, initially disciples of John the Baptist, through his witness see in Jesus the Messiah whom they are seeking, the answer to their quest. I feel that my use of the three questions conforms with their purpose in the text.

My use of the three questions is analogous to what Witherington claimed was the evangelist's purpose in writing the gospel: where John wanted to explore Jesus' identity, I explore the identity of the PSW. This fits with the strategy of canonical narrative theology, in which scripture provides a key to understanding an aspect of human life. The first question I use is that of the priests and Levites, addressed to John the Baptist: ‘who are you?’ (John 1.19). If the purpose of the gospel is to present the story of Jesus, then identity is a major focus throughout, starting with this

question. Identity is also a major focus for me, in telling the story of the people I have come to call PSWs, and in conceptualising who they are. The question ‘who are you?’ provides the focus for the discussion of our understanding of our priestly identity in chapter 8.

Jesus’ first spoken words, as recorded by the evangelist, are: ‘what do you seek?’ (John 1.38). In answering this question on behalf of the participants in my research, I find a rationale for who we are. The question resonates for me with what Augustine wrote in his *Confessions*: “The thought of you [God] stirs him [Man, *sic*] so deeply that he cannot be content unless he praises you, because you made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you.” (Augustine, 1961, p. 21). Jesus asks his first disciples – and us, his disciples at this time – what they are seeking; the rest of the gospel shows that the answer is Jesus himself. The question of desire, of wanting to be part of the *missio Dei*, working with God, is part of the story told by the interviewees, and so Jesus’ question is as pertinent for us as it is for Andrew and his companion. ‘What do you seek?’ is the focus for chapter 9.

Jesus’ question was addressed to Andrew and his friend; their response is another question: ‘where are you staying?’ (John 1.39). The word translated ‘staying’ is *menein*, with its connotations of abiding and remaining. I use this to motivate discussion of sacred presence as a hermeneutic for understanding the PSW vocation. The particularity of the gospel is that Jesus lived in a particular place at a particular time; he was a Jew, rooted in his context and culture. As PSWs, we are rooted in both an ecclesial context, and also in our secular work. Part of choosing to be such a person, or feeling that this is who/where we are called to be, is a sense of needing to be a priest in both the church and in the secular world, working alongside colleagues for whom the church may well mean nothing at all – and in that place to be a priest. This is the focus for chapter 10.

My use of these three questions is a form of canonical narrative theology, in that I have used John’s account of Jesus going to John the Baptist, and there initiating the messianic community, as a hermeneutic for conceptualising the identity of the PSW (section 5.3). Three key features, which this hermeneutic enables me to explore, are that the PSW is a priest (section 6.2, chapter 8), whose priestly vocation is played out in secular work (section 6.3, chapter 9) as well as in the church, and who is a sign of God’s presence in the world of work (section 6.3, chapter 10). As such, the PSW participates in the *missio Dei* (section 6.1).

### ***Locating myself in the curation***

The “quest is to know and to live well”, which requires “ongoing critical reflection on our own lives, on our own understanding and on the histories that have made us what we are and given us the commitments we have” (Bennett and Rowland, 2016, p. 3). As many theologians and others have emphasised over recent years, humans are story-telling creatures, and so to know me “you must know my story, for my story defines who I am. And if *I* want to know *myself*, to gain insight into the meaning of my own life, then I, too, must come to know my own story” (McAdams, 1993, p. 11, original italics; cf. Anderson and Foley, 1998).

The practice of research was not new to me when I started this research project, as I had completed a PhD in mathematics education in early 2005, and research was an intrinsic part of my secular work from 2001 until I took early retirement in 2013. I had also conducted empirical research in a local church context for my MA in Practical Theology in 2010-2011. By 2012, although I had been ordained deacon in 2009, and priest in 2010, I was still struggling to understand the nature of my vocation as a PSW, however, and, finding little that helped me, I therefore embarked on this research. In 2019, over six years later, I am no longer actively seeking out much work as a maths educator, and it is this research that occupies a significant part of my working life together with my parish ministry. While the content of my research is not secular, the practice of analysis and writing is not part of parish ministry, and so I still consider myself to be a PSW.

My location in this research is different from previous research projects I have undertaken, however. In my maths education research, I wanted to find out about the effectiveness of certain methods of teaching, so my research questions were of the form: how does this particular tool or that medium or a particular suite of resources contribute to my teaching or that of others, or to student learning? My self-understanding as a teacher and educator was not bound up in these projects: although I needed to subject my practice to scrutiny, at no point did I feel that I needed to interrogate my sense of who I am. In my MA dissertation, I examined the understandings of mission in the congregations of the churches where I served as a curate. Again, I was not a primary subject in the research.

In writing my three Stage 1 papers, I was working with my own self-understanding through an exploration of theological literature. In paper 1 (Gage, 2013), my focus was my own identity, considered through the lenses of priestly ministry in the C of E and work as a theological category. I wanted to bring these together in a “theology of the ‘gap’, which is a theology of ‘both ... and’”. I identified the ‘gap’ as “the liminal

space, which is both threshold and chasm, between church/parish and secular workplace ... which I, as an MSE and priest, need to inhabit as holy ground, a place where God is at work” (p. iii). In paper 2 (Gage, 2014), I discussed the theology behind the C of E’s understanding of priestly ministry, finding a place where I could situate my own self-understanding as a priest in God the Trinity, rather than in the person of Christ. In my third paper (Gage, 2015), I presented my research proposal, in which I said that I wanted “to explore [how] the particularity of the priest in secular employment (PSE) contributes to theologies of priesthood”. I considered “a number of lenses through which to view the PSE: priestliness, the continuum between exile and at home, and that between sacred and secular” (p. iii).

The process of conducting research in maths education required me to examine my pedagogical biases and assumptions, and on that basis to challenge my practice as a teacher: was what I did consistent with what I believed, and if not, what was I going to do about it? This research project has taken me into many theological areas, making me think deeply about my biases and assumptions not just where they affect my own practice as a PSW, but opening up my understanding of what it means to be a priest, what church is, and ultimately, how I meet with, and in so far as I can, understand God.

My starting point generally is not to accord either priesthood or the church with any special status: priests are human beings, and the church is composed of human beings, and as such priests and church are under both grace and sin. In exploring what my own ordination as priest means to me, and reflecting deeply on what the interviewees said about theirs, I still do not see that ordination provides a special status in the way that, for instance, *Lumen gentium* does, when it claimed that the “priesthood of the faithful” and “the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood” are different “from one another in essence and not only in degree” (Paul VI, 1964, II.10). Having been a Baptist for many years, I see the priesthood of all believers as fundamental, with baptism as the ordaining sacrament, but as one of my interviewees argued, because we are not yet in the fullness of Christ’s kingdom, some people are called to be priests in a particular way, to act as signs that nevertheless the kingdom is already among us.

Regarding the church, I see the visible, local church as another such sign, although I frequently find myself in despair at some outrageous thing someone in one of the churches I serve has said or done, or at some decree emanating from on high. At such times, I remind myself that we are all sinners and in need of grace, and that the church, both nationally, and locally, is no less subject to sinful powers than any other institution. Reading about Augustine’s two cities, the *civitas terrena* and the *civitas*

*Dei*, which are inseparable this side of the Parousia (as in the parable of the wheat and the tares, Matthew 13.24-30) is helpful to me here.

Encountering the work of Fiddes (2000) and others on the Trinity as a perichoretic relationship has been a real gift, not just to my research, but to my faith. It has provided me with an image which I can link with my own work as a maths educator. I could use the analogy of the barn dance, in which people move into a space, then vacate it to allow someone else to move into it, not only as a way to visualise (however imperfectly) the relationship that is the Trinity, but also to make connections with the Group Theory that once so delighted me as a maths student, and which can be displayed through line and square dances. I had always seen maths as saying something significant about God in terms of order and pattern, which Group Theory describes in a way that satisfies something deep in my soul.

Throughout this research, I have needed to undergo a process of interrogation, so that I have been a research subject myself, so the personal impact has been much greater. As an insider, I have needed to articulate aspects of my own story which inform how I have conducted the research, and why I have made the choices I have in method, analysis and interpretation, and in forming the conceptual framework. At appropriate points I therefore include autobiographical sections as part of the curated material.

### **5.3 The conceptual framework**

Phenomenology asks what does this phenomenon look like, what are its essential elements (section 2.2). Reflecting at length on all my data, and my own experience as a PSW, I have constructed a conceptual framework for understanding the PSW, in which I present the PSW as a co-participant with God in the *missio Dei*. There are four key relationships which inform how this plays out for the PSW: with God, with our secular work, with the world, and with the church. This forms the first level of the IPA, and is the content of chapter 7. These four relationships are not independent of each other, however: drawing on all of them are three significant ways of describing the unique PSW identity and vocation, and this forms the second level of the IPA. The inter-relationships are explored in three chapters (8, 9 and 10), summarised in three questions from John 1: 'who are you?', 'what do you seek?', and 'where are you staying?'. Answering these questions enables me to explore the identity of the PSW as a priest, to consider why their secular work matters in itself, and to suggest that they witness to God's presence in God's world, and so are a sacramental presence there. The four key relationships situate the PSW in a network of relationships,

discussed in the first section below, while the three questions bring these relationships together, discussed in the second section below.

### ***The four key relationships***

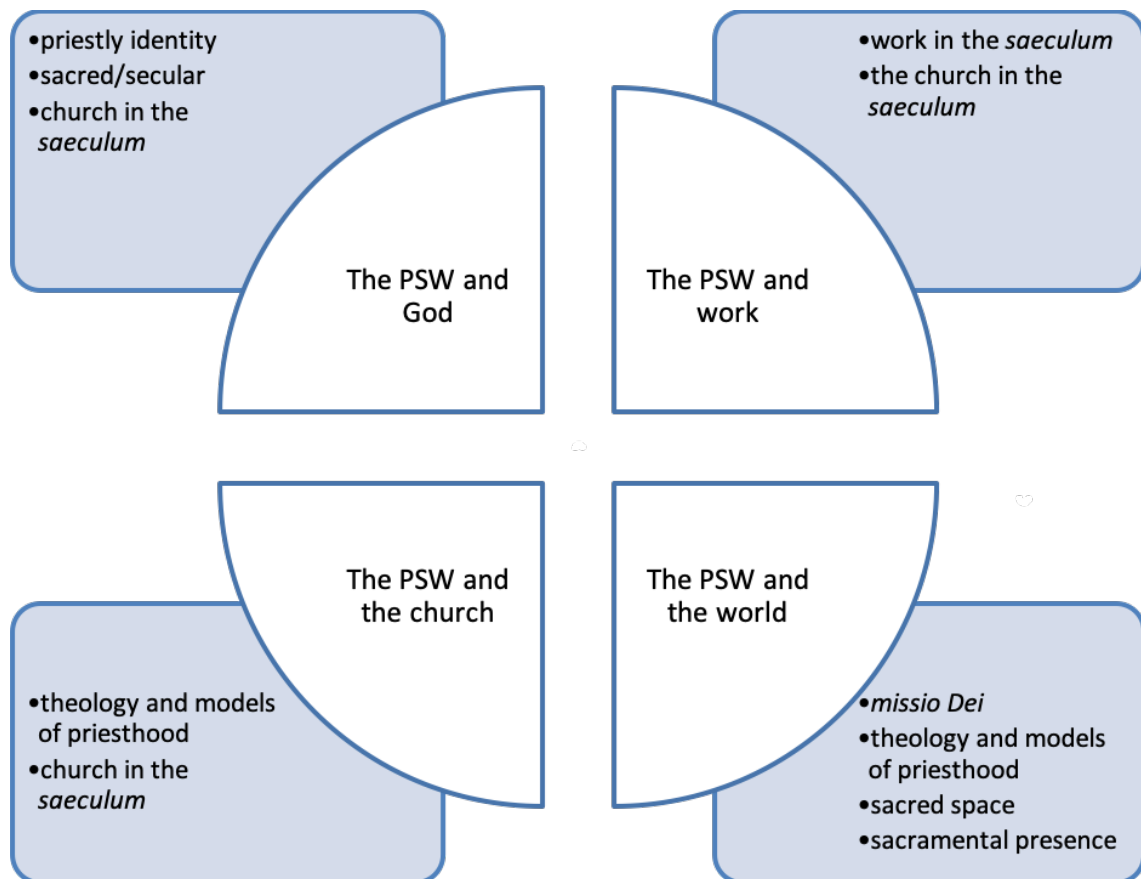
In the CIG, we talked at length about our own stories. What we had in common was that we were all priests who also engaged in secular work: three of us had been ordained in mid-life while in secular employment, which we continued post-ordination; the fourth, ordained in her early 20s, had a subsequent period of considerable soul-searching about her vocation, and is now half-time vicar of a church, and half-time an entrepreneur with her own business. Beneath those bare outlines lie four stories which we explored together, and which the notes I wrote while listening to the CIG session recordings summarise. In section 4.4, I described the results of performing IPA on the CIG data. I identified four superordinate themes from this data, and then linked them to four significant questions which arose both in the CIG and in the interviews, as shown in Table 5:

**Table 5: Result of IPA on CIG data**

<b>CIG superordinate theme</b>	<b>Significant question</b>
Vocation	What does it mean to be a priest in the secular?
Work	Does it make any difference to how we do our jobs?
Bridge between church and secular world	How does this proclaim Christ to the world?
Relationship with the institutional church	What is the role of the PSW in the life of the church?

This analysis introduces the conceptual framework, and is summarised in Figure 4: boxes to the side of each section show the theological literature, discussed in chapter 6, with which these questions engage.



**Figure 4: Curating the four narratives**

### ***Interpreting the identity and vocation of the PSW***

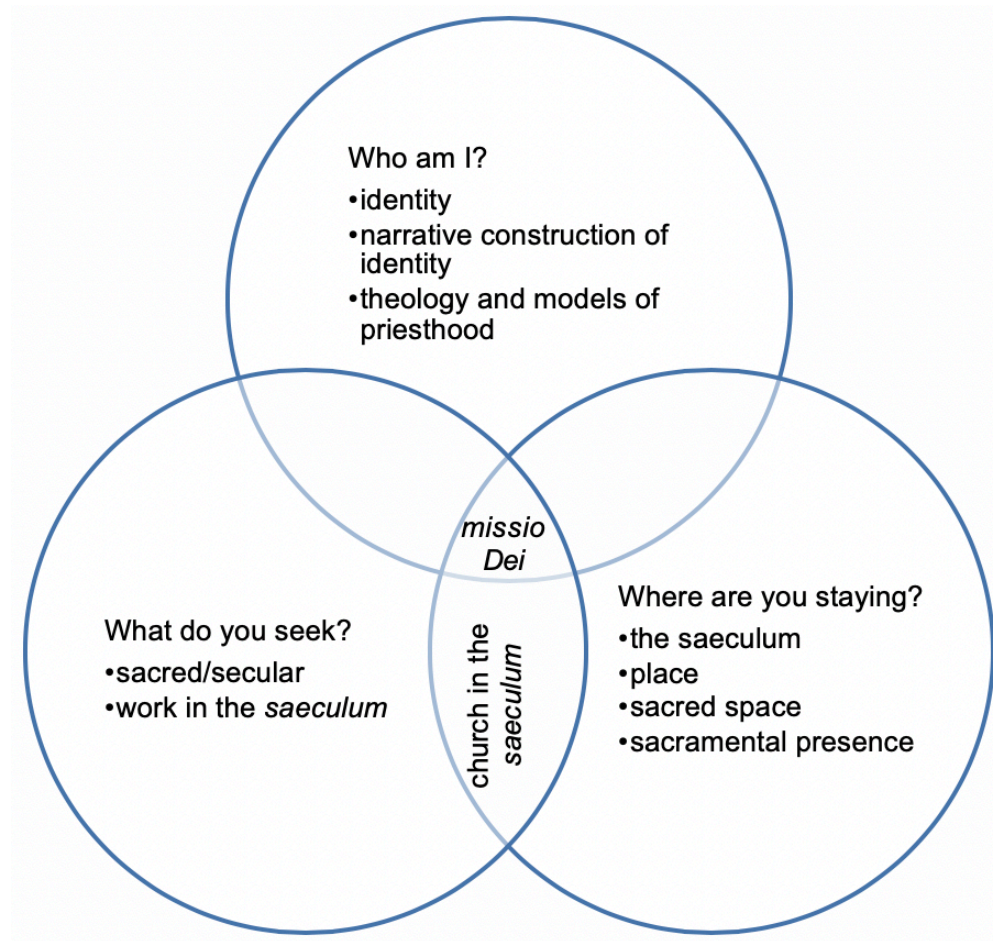
Each of chapters 8, 9 and 10 starts with an excerpt from John 1, which includes the title question. I then briefly explain how I make use of that question to frame what follows, leading into a short autobiographical essay intended to elucidate why I have chosen to interpret the title question in the way that I have. In the curation metaphor, this could be considered as an introductory panel, contextualising the exhibits in a gallery. The main part of each chapter comprises a selection of excerpts from the interview data intended to showcase facets of the interviewees' self-understanding as PSWs. In Table 6, I summarise how I have curated IPA superordinate themes from the interview data, by relating them to one of the three questions from John 1. Since it is acceptable to reduce the number of superordinate themes in IPA, in order to provide a rich description of the phenomenon being studied, in which themes chosen illuminate each other (Smith and Osborn, 2015, p. 46), 'future of the church' and 'perception of PSW' are not used here.

**Table 6: Grouping the superordinate themes for the second level of IPA**

Superordinate theme from interview data	Question from John 1
PSW vocation	Who are you?
Why be ordained?	Who are you?
Theology of priesthood	Who are you?
Identity	Who are you?
Work matters	What do you seek?
Aware of God in all of life	What do you seek?
Building the kingdom	What do you seek?
Fulfilment and joy	What do you seek?
Church/secular interface	Where are you staying?
Holding the tension	Where are you staying?
Parish ministry	Where are you staying?
Future of the church	n/a
Perception of PSW	n/a

In Figure 5, I show the three questions together with those parts of the theological contextual material (chapter 6) which inform my treatment of each question. It is presented as a Venn diagram, in order to show overlap.

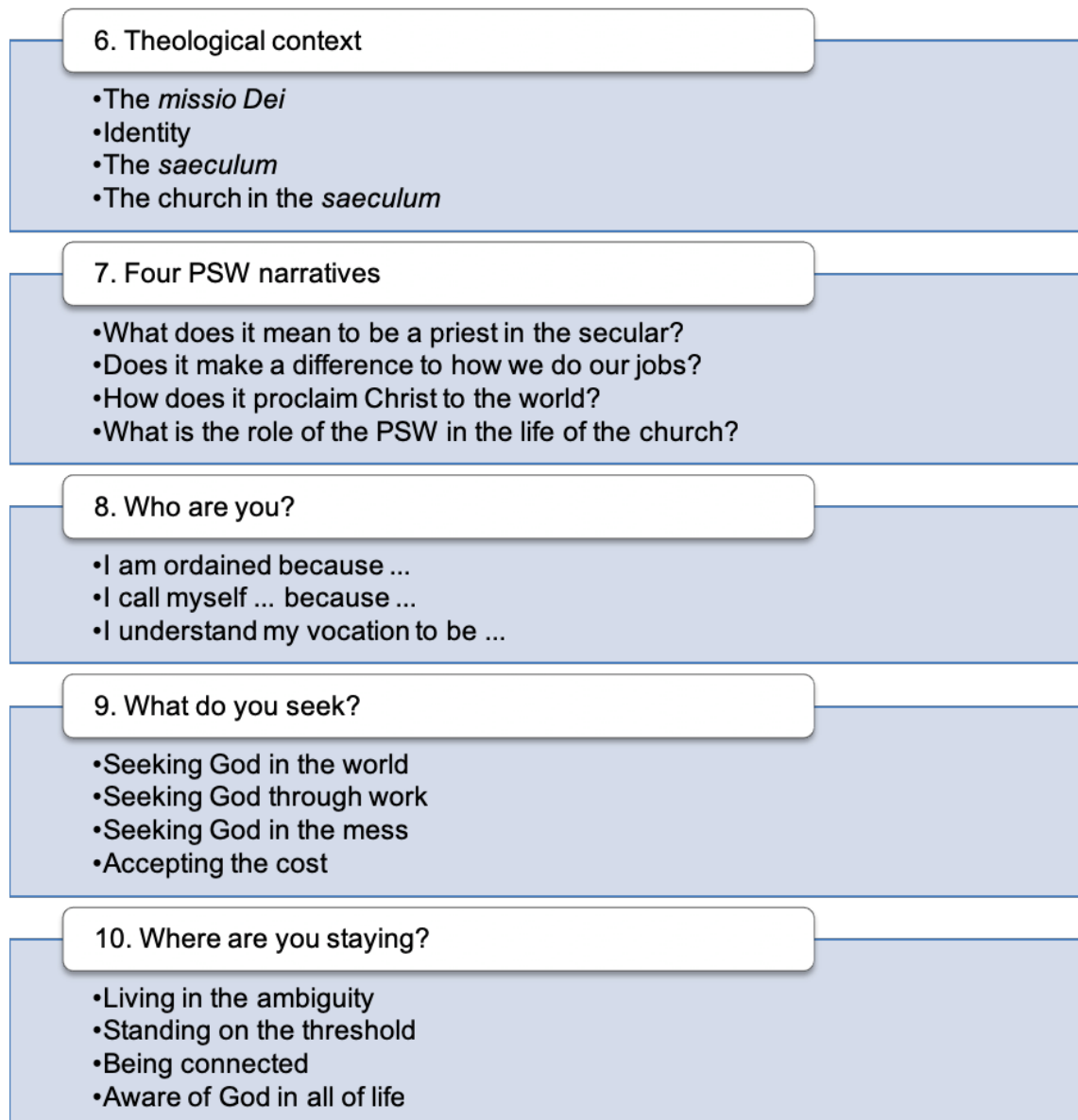
**Figure 5: Relationship between the three questions from John 1 and the theological literature**



The final section of each chapter forms a conclusion to the chapter, doing the work of a concluding panel in an exhibition.

## 5.4 The next steps in the curation

This chapter forms a hinge between the preceding chapters, which introduced the context and the research, and then focused on the more technical aspects of methodology, research method, data and analysis. Figure 6 shows the content of the next set of chapters, in which (as described above) I use the analysis of the data at two levels to present my interpretation of the vocation of the PSW, and to answer my research question, as to how PSWs make sense of their vocation.

**Figure 6: Diagrammatic representation of subsequent chapters**

## 6 Theological context: living between Pentecost and the Parousia

As I have explored theological literature and reflected on why I have chosen the authors and subjects that I have, I have discovered much about myself: this has truly been a personal journey of discovery quite as much as it has been an investigation of my participants' self-understanding. As Bennett and

Rowland (2016, pp. 167-169) acknowledged, such a process is "not primarily about analytical and cognitive intelligence, but about a determined and committed reflective engagement", which starts from imagination, with reason backing it up.

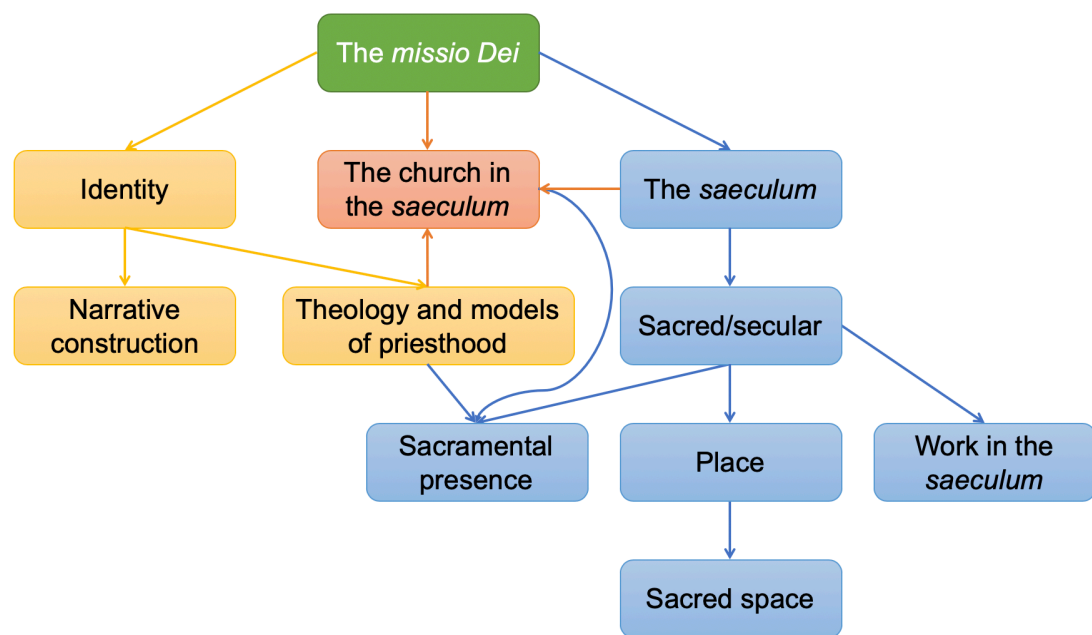
Bennett and Rowland further argued that there needs to be a 'critical space' which provides "a different perspective on ourselves, on our world and what we read" (p. 162). Such a space is necessary if we are to examine our contexts honestly, particularly given the impossibility of disentangling subject and object. Insider research requires attention to autobiography, but must also recognise the risk of self-indulgence and lazy acceptance of surface truth, so that we do not treat "our experiences, practices and prejudices as the yardstick of true understanding and practice, but [interrogate] them to expose what lies beneath, opening it to critical scrutiny" (p. 164). Such a critical space is provided by both relevant theological literature and by my participants' views where they challenge my taken for granted assumptions and biases. I acknowledge, however, that the tendency to find what we want to find makes it both difficult and necessary to establish such a critical space.

In this chapter, I discuss a range of theological literature which has informed the conceptual framework presented in section 5.3 and which contributes to my understanding of the unique vocation of the PSW. Figure 7 is a mind map, showing connections between the areas which are included. This is a complex diagram, and so I have not included all the possible or potential interconnections, in order not to detract from those I have chosen to prioritise.

### Glossary

C of E	Church of England
CIG	Co-operative inquiry group
FTS	Full time stipendiary (priest)
MSE	Minister/ministry in secular employment
NSM	Non-stipendiary minister
PSW	Priest in secular work

Figure 7: Mind map



In introducing my conceptual framework, I argued that the PSW is a person who works with God in the *missio Dei*. The *missio Dei* encompasses so much more than I have shown here, but the topics in this diagram are those which have become significant for me in working out what it means to interpret the PSW through the lens of the *missio Dei*. In section 3.3, I related the way in which I have chosen to work with the interview data to my work in maths education, where letting the data speak became an important pedagogical tool for me. As I reflected on the interview data, I felt it was speaking to me about the sense of identity as priest that my interviewees felt, and the importance of their secular work as part of their vocation. Later, I came to believe that these feed into my conceptualisation of the PSW as a sacramental presence, who by their acceptance of, and formation in, a priestly identity, is a sign of the presence of God in secular places. In order to develop this, I needed the areas of literature that I have set out in the mind map above. The three areas of 'identity', 'the church in the *saeculum*', and 'the *saeculum*', are different in nature, and their being placed on a level is not meant to make any kind of theological statement.

My starting point is a discussion of the *missio Dei* (6.1) which directly informs the discussion of the question 'how does this proclaim Christ to the world?' (section 7.3), and I then focus on the areas of identity and the *saeculum*. Under the heading of 'identity', I discuss the narrative construction of identity, and theology and models of priesthood: this section (6.2) forms a basis for an exploration of the identity of the PSW which contributes to the questions 'what does it mean to be a priest in the secular?' (7.1), and 'who are you?' in chapter 8. Under the heading of 'the *saeculum*'

(6.3), I discuss what is meant by ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’. I use that as a basis for considering theologies of place, encompassing the concept of sacred space, and of work. Theology of work forms a basis for exploring the questions ‘does it make any difference to how we do our jobs?’ (7.2) and to ‘what do you seek?’ in chapter 8. Theology of place is the context in which ‘where are you staying?’ is considered in chapter 10. Strands from throughout this section are then brought together in an exploration of sacramental presence (6.4), which underlies part of the discussion in section 7.3 and in chapter 10, ending in a discussion of the role of the church in the *saeculum*, which is the background to considering the question ‘what is the role of the PSW in the church?’ (7.4).

## 6.1 The *missio Dei*

In the Introduction to his seminal work on mission, Bosch (1991, p. 10) asserted that mission “refers primarily to the *missio Dei* (God’s mission), that is, God’s self-revelation” through God’s love of and involvement in the world, and “in which the church is privileged to participate”. Although it has become associated with ecclesiology and theology of mission in past decades, the term *missio Dei* can be found much earlier in Augustine’s writings, where, in *De Trinitate*, he discussed the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit by the Father. The language of ‘sending’ in connection with Jesus is much earlier, however, occurring in John’s Gospel (20.21).

Recent interpretation of the *missio Dei* was seminally articulated by Barth at the Brandenburg Mission Conference of 1932 (Bosch, 1991, p. 389), where Barth argued that because God is originally and eternally in fellowship in Godself, so God could cause there to be a covenant with human beings, so that in history human beings could participate in God’s triune life (Flett, 2014, p. 72). It is because “God in and for himself [*sic*] for and to all eternity transitions the gap between the above and the below that he is missionary”: it is an essential property of God to be missionary (p. 72). The Son is sent by the Father, and the Holy Spirit “transitions the partnership of the Father and the Son” and “creates a [human] community in correspondence to the God who lives his own proper life in coming to us” (p. 73). The effect of God acting in this community is to make it into a witness to the acts of God (p. 73). Mission is thus part of the doctrine of the Trinity, rather than an aspect of ecclesiology or soteriology (Bosch, 1991, p. 390).

In outlining the history of the concept of ‘*missio Dei*’ over past decades, Bosch saw the critical point at which the relationship between church and mission changed dating

from the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Tambaram in 1938<sup>15</sup>, at which it was agreed that “[t]he dividing lines no longer ran between ‘Christianity’ and ‘paganism’, between the church and the world, but through the church as well”, and where it was recognised “that church and mission belong together indissolubly” (p. 370). Between Tambaram in 1938 and the next but one meeting in Willingen in 1952<sup>16</sup>, there was a shift from focus on church-centred mission to a mission-centred church.

it was recognized that the church could be neither the starting point nor the goal of mission. God’s salvific work precedes both church and mission. We should not subordinate mission to the church nor the church to mission; both should, rather be taken up into the *missio Dei*, which now became the overarching concept. The *missio Dei* institutes the *missiones ecclesiae*. The church changes from being the sender to being the one sent. (Bosch, 1991, p. 370)

On the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism website, it is claimed that “Willingen is rightly considered to have had the most lasting influence on ecumenical mission theology” and that “the idea of *missio Dei*, that was taken up in the follow-up of Willingen, proved to be most creative” (World Council of Churches, 2005). The emphasis on “a missionary ecclesiology of the local church” was confirmed through the work of Vatican II in *Lumen gentium* (Bosch, 1991, p. 371). *Lumen gentium* saw the church as receiving “the mission to proclaim and to spread among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God” (Paul VI, 1964:1.5).

The metaphor for the church as a pilgrim people, based on the image of Israel in the wilderness and prominent in 1 Peter (eg. 2.11) and Hebrews (eg. 11.13), emerged in Protestantism through Bonhöffer’s writings (so, for instance, “[t]he church is the church only when it exists for others ... The church must share in the secular problems of ordinary human life” (Bonhöffer, 1971, p. 382)), and was part of the new thinking of Willingen (Bosch, 1991, p. 373). This metaphor is important, because it recalls the meaning of the Greek *ekklesia*, meaning ‘called out’ of the world, in order to be sent back into the world. The church has no permanent place in which to abide in the world, but is always *en route* to the kingdom of God. The concept of the church *for* others

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<sup>15</sup> The third such; the two previous conferences were held in Edinburgh in 1910, and in Jerusalem in 1928.

<sup>16</sup> There was a small meeting in Whitby, Canada, in 1947.



was criticised as demonstrating a western perception that underestimates others, however, and so it evolved into the church *with* others (p. 375).

These new ways of thinking led to the church no longer being seen as either the ground or goal of mission, because the church is not the kingdom of God, even if it is “on earth, the initial budding forth of that kingdom” (Paul VI, 1964:1.5). However, Bosch (1991, p. 381) claimed that there was a tension between the church seen as “the sole bearer of a message of salvation” and the church as “an illustration – in word and deed – of God’s involvement with the world”, although he also questioned whether these extremes needed to be made exclusive, rather than co-existing in a creative tension. Another way of understanding the church is to see it as “an ellipse with two foci”: one focus is its prayer and worship, the other is its engagement with, and challenge of, the world (p. 385). It is only possible for the church to engage in mission if it is different from the world, yet also in the world (p. 386): the church is simultaneously both part of the *missio Dei* and in need of “repentance and conversion” so “an object of the *missio Dei*” (pp. 386-387). “The *missio Dei* is God’s activity, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church may be privileged to participate” (p. 391); it is not to be restricted to the church, nor to be conceptualised as ‘saving souls’, but encompasses God’s involvement in, and love for, the world.

However, the term *missio Dei* went through a period when it appeared that it might be equated with progress in a way that made the church if not redundant, then at best one agent among many (p. 392). Writing a few years later than Bosch, Bevans and Schroeder (2004, p. 7, original italics) could claim that “*the church* is not of ultimate importance”, because “the point of the church is not the church itself”. Its purpose is “to point beyond itself”, through the power of the Holy Spirit sharing in the work of Jesus. Bevans and Schroeder (2004, p. 394) summarised mission in the “threefold structure of word (*kerygma*), action (*diakonia*) and being (*koinonia* or *martyria*)”, carried out through “pastoral work, the new evangelization of reaching the unchurched, the transformation of the world and the evangelization of those who have not heard the gospel or among whom the church is not fully viable”. In participating, through word, action and being, in the work of God, the church is not the primary agent, but this does not need to imply that it is redundant however, because it is “the chosen partner of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in God’s mission” (Atkins, 2008, p. 17). “The Church derives its being from the missionary God and is created and shaped to share in the *missio Dei*, the goal of which is the coming of the kingdom” (p. 19).

## 6.2 Identity

As Taylor (1989, p. 35) claimed: “I define who I am by defining where I speak from, ... in social space, in the geography of social statuses and functions, ... and also crucially in the space of moral and spiritual orientation within which my most important defining relations are lived out”. In the previous section, I discussed the development of the concept of the *missio Dei* in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in order to situate the PSW theologically. In this section, I discuss the formation of identity, leading into a subsection on theology and models of priesthood, because an important aspect of the identity of the PSW is their *priestly* identity.

### ***Narrative construction of identity***

It is impossible to dismiss the significance of the stories we tell ourselves and others in establishing our sense of who we are, our identity: reading through the CIG and interview data, I was constantly aware that it is overwhelmingly cast in the form of narrative. As we explored what it means to be a PSW, participants told stories about their lives and about their encounters with God and with others who were part of helping them to make sense of themselves. There was a holding together of memory, anticipation and present experience (cf. Crites, 2007; Crites, 1989), which supports Ganzevoort’s (2013) claim that a narrative perspective can be traced, even when the form of a text is not obviously that of a narrative.

In a seminal essay, Crites (1989) claimed that told stories are “one of the most important cultural expressions” (p. 66), designating the implicit stories which form our sense of who we are, and which are also formative for our culture, as ‘sacred’: “not so much because gods are commonly celebrated in them, but because men’s [*sic*] sense of self and world is created through them” (p. 70). He further argued that “every sacred story is a creation story”, not just because a self is created in it, but because “the story itself creates a world of consciousness and the self that is oriented to it” (p. 71). It is through story that we can hold together past, present and future, because narrative is the only form in which “the full temporality of experience” can be unified, holding together what is remembered, what is anticipated and what is experienced (p. 78).

It is through telling and retelling our stories that we create for ourselves our sense of who we are, constructing a reality, which we then endow with objective meaning, but still allowing for reconstruction (Roberts and Sims, 2017, p. 48). As Ganzevoort argued (2012, p. 216), identity is “not some essential quality that needs to be uncovered, but the story one tells about oneself for a particular audience”. Even

when the form is not obviously that of a narrative, there can be a narrative perspective in which “the construction of meaning and thus also the construction of religious meaning ... take place in the encounter between the human mind and an external reality”. The form that such meaning takes is narrative, because “we experience life in story-like forms ... We live our lives from day to day, but we understand our life as if it were a story” (Ganzevoort, 2013, pp.2-3, cf. Crites, 1989).

Ganzevoort therefore developed a narrative hermeneutic which weaves together two three-fold frameworks: Crites’ (1989) temporal framework of past, present and future, and Ricoeur’s (1991) contextual framework of narrator, text (understood as action as well as words), and audience. Both frameworks were in evidence in the CIG: as we talked, we told our stories, often responding to each other with another story, bringing our life-histories into the mix, our present contexts, and our hopes and fears for the future. In the interviews, the overall direction of the conversation was decided by me, but I remained alert to signals from the interviewee that they wanted to head off in a different direction because that is where their telling of their story was taking them at that moment. When I felt it appropriate, I contributed my own stories, sometimes as a way of empathising, sometimes to suggest a different interpretation for us to consider. Looking back at the data, I see the temporal and contextual three-fold frameworks being woven seamlessly together time and time again.

Arguing that identity is not absolute, Graham (2002) claimed that it is “the discursive result of our inhabiting a culture” (p. 30), where the “self is merely a series of *performances*” (p. 107, original italics). She concluded that identity is not ontological, not to deny our role as subjects with agency, but “merely to insist upon the cultural context of action and identity” (p. 109), so that practice is privileged as the arena in which identity is formed (p. 110). The significance of narrative is that it “defines the shape of the community and helps locate individual meaning and identity” (p. 113, cf. Appiah, 2005; Appiah, 1994).

I prefer not to contrast construction with reactive and performative methods of forming identity, seeing them rather as complementary. Discussing whether identity is discovered or constructed, Appiah (2005) rejected such dichotomies, claiming that because we are not impotent in shaping our identity, discovery is not an adequate descriptor, and because we are not god-like, neither is construction. Instead, he argued that we fashion our identity, and are ourselves fashioned, through our relationships (pp.17-18). Exemplifying this, one interviewee talked about how his work colleagues would engage him in conversations about his ordination journey, which helped him to articulate his changing understanding of himself, in both the pre- and post-ordination phases. On the one hand, in reacting to their interest, he told

stories (performance) to illustrate how his self-understanding and world-view were developing; on the other, he saw himself as engaged in a process of formation, through which he would develop his self-understanding as a PSW (discovery).

Although the precise mechanisms by which our identities form are complex, relationships are profoundly important in the process. Differentiating between collective forms of identity (such as gender, race, ethnicity and religion) and personal identity, Appiah (1994, p. 151) emphasised the “dialogic nature of identity construction”, both through the relationship of the individual with significant others, and also with societal norms (p. 154). As an African-American, he acknowledged the role of white American, as well as African-American, society and institutions in shaping African-American identity (p. 155), arguing that finding – or not finding – our individual stories in the larger narratives available to us is part of whether we feel included or excluded (p. 160). These larger societal narratives are ‘scripts’ which “provide models for telling our lives” (Appiah, 2005, p. 22). Part of the power of such a script is that of naming, initiating processes of differentiation, and thereby providing identity, shaping what we feel is appropriate to that identity, and what is not (2005, pp.65-70).

Difference can be a positive factor as we work out who we are, and what our place is. If we accept that identity is constructed through our interactions with others, then notions of a ‘pure’ identity are inappropriate, since being in relationship with a number of different communities inevitably implies multiple identities (cf. Appiah’s ironic recognition of the role of white culture in forming his African-American identity, 2005, p. 106). Difference and tension are therefore not necessarily undesirable. Towards the end of the final CIG session, as we responded to the follow-up interview transcripts, we found ourselves discussing conflict and tension and transformation through the analogy of a violin string which has to be held in tension to make a sound. Tension arises between people or communities when there is difference, and yet both tension and difference are of value because they have the power to be transformative. As we agreed in the CIG, conflict is inevitable, but it does not have to be destructive, unless we allow it to be.

### ***Theology of priesthood***

#### ***Dominant theology of priesthood in the C of E***

There is no single theology of priesthood in the C of E. Describing a session with a group of ordinands, Tomlin (2014, p. ix) categorised participants as including “those who had a very strong idea of the identity of the priest, but a less developed sense of the priesthood of the whole church”, but “also those who were very convinced of the

priesthood of all believers, but who struggled to articulate a sense of what individual priestly ministry might be". This encapsulates an ongoing debate.

An important starting point for exploring the C of E's understanding of the priesthood is Bishop Moberly's 1897 defence of Anglican orders, *Ministerial Priesthood* (eg. Greenwood, 1994; Pickard, 2009). The immediate context of Moberly's apologia was threefold: the "[e]rastianism whereby the Church was regarded as a department of State in a confidently Christian society" (Greenwood, 1994, p. 8); the rejection of Anglican orders by Pope Leo XIII in *Apostolicae curae* (1896); and more functionalist understandings of priestly ministry from some parts of the C of E (Hanson, 1969). In his *Introduction* to the re-issue of *Ministerial Priesthood* in 1969, Hanson stated that the key question for Moberly was: 'How is the church's ministry authorised?' (1969, p. viii; cf. Pickard, 2009, p. 53). Moberly's answer was that the church's ministry did not rest upon the authority of either the state or Rome, but on Christ through the mechanism of apostolic succession (Moberly, 1969). The church's priesthood is primary, because the church is the body of Christ, and so baptism is the sacrament which admits a person to divine citizenship (p. 66). The priest does not stand between Christ and his body, but is an organ of the body, through which the body performs certain functions (p. 68). The office of the priest is thus representative rather than vicarious (pp. 71, 78). However, although Moberly did not understand the priest as Christ's direct substitute, neither did he see ordination as purely functional, but regarded ordination as a setting apart of men [*sic*] in which an indelible character was conferred (pp. 89, 92).

With its republication in 1969, *Ministerial Priesthood* continued to be influential, arguably forming the basis for the C of E's understanding of the priestly office through much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Greenwood, 1994; Pickard, 2009). Moberly's focus on Christ, the founder of the church whose representative the priest is, is a christological interpretation of what it means to be a priest, which has contributed to a theology of priesthood which emphasises the role of the priest at the expense of that of the laity, losing any sense that the priest is one of the *laos* (Pickard, 2009, p. 39). This led Greenwood (1994, p. 30) to claim that the C of E had fallen under the sway of a 'foundational myth': the church is "divinely-established ... founded in prescriptive detail by Christ", with the commission to the twelve named apostles handed down to their successors, and then through apostolic succession to current day bishops and the clergy whom they ordain. The consequence of this has been to disable attempts by the laity to find a real voice, and to entrench clerical control (p. 31), thus contributing to the overall lack of influence of the church outside its own structures (p. 32). The emergence of charismatic forms of worship from the 1960s onwards,

however, challenged this through the rediscovery of the gifting of all Christians by the Holy Spirit, together with its corollary, that ministry need no longer be restricted, but could be an opportunity for all, lay as well as ordained, to exercise their gifts (p. 78; cf. Pickard, 2009, pp.36-38).

A christological starting point tends to separate church and world, priest and lay, in a binary opposition, in which it is difficult for those who are not full-time in ministry to find a place. However, if a christological emphasis implies that the church is defined through its ordained ministry, so that lay and ordained are seen to be qualitatively different in some way, a pneumatological emphasis suggests that ministry arises through the gifts of all, including the laity, and difference is functional rather than essential. Where difference is emphasised, boundaries are strengthened, resulting in differentiated ministries, and a clear sense of how different orders relate to each other. Where the emphasis is on equality, boundaries are weakened, ministries and roles become more flexible, and there may be confusion in how they relate to one another.

### *A trinitarian approach*

A relational understanding of the Trinity opens up new ways of thinking. Using the analogy of a circle dance, Fiddes (2000, p. 77), a Baptist theologian, described the mutual fellowship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit as symmetrical, with reciprocal relationships between them. He visualised this as a dance in which there is pattern and harmony and order, with music and a caller directing what is happening. Not all the dancers do exactly the same thing at the same time, but all work together, moving into a space and then vacating it to allow someone else to move into it, as they follow the rhythm of the dance. This image is dynamic, not static, providing for difference, while avoiding any suggestion that difference is permanent, or that any one participant is more important or necessary than any other.

For Fiddes (2000, p. 74), the attraction of the dance analogy is that it keeps alive “a challenge to the image of a dominating God whose power lies in immobility and in being secure from being affected by the changing world”. It is not a closed dance, since we are invited to participate in the dance through “an interweaving of relational movements and actions in which we can become involved” (pp. 78-79). Our participation in God is eschatological, however, in that we will not know it in all fullness in this age. While we wait for the age to come, God has provided the sacraments, “pieces of earthly stuff that are meeting places with ... God” (p. 281). For Fiddes, one of these meeting places is the pastor, by which he means anyone who has care of others, and who points beyond themselves to God (p. 294).

Although Fiddes is a Baptist theologian, there are voices in the C of E saying similar things about the Trinity and its implications for understanding priesthood. In 2014, I attended a seminar, led by a former Bishop of Grimsby, David Rosedale, in which he argued that the christological interpretation of priesthood has had the effect of disabling the laity by allowing clericalism to flourish, and that the only way forward for the C of E is to base its theology of priesthood on the dynamic, perichoretic Trinity (cf. Rosedale, 2010, in which he cites Fiddes among others). A trinitarian starting point allows us to see lay and ordained, worker priest, NSM, PSW and FTS, as pastors in Fiddes' (2000, p. 215) sense, who, by "daring to act for God" in their various ways, help to incarnate God in the world.

### *Other 20<sup>th</sup> century models of priesthood*

Between 1943 and 1954, some French priests left parish ministry to work in low-paid manual jobs (eg. Heer and Huffman, 1954; Mantle, 2000, p. 1). This originated in the period 1942/3 when French workers were conscripted by the German occupiers, because priests were not allowed to accompany workers into the slave camps unless they also were workers (Torry, 2010, p. 71, cf. Heer and Huffman, 1954). This experience provided the worker priests with a better understanding of the working class, and its alienation from the church, with the result that, after the war, some chose to exercise a ministry of presence and identification by engaging in full-time manual work. Their higher level of education led many to active roles in trades unions, resulting in conflict with the church hierarchy however (eg. Torry, 2010, p. 71). A lack of bridge-building with the established church meant they had no support when in 1953/4, they were suppressed by Rome, accused of being communists, and told that they could not be both workers and priests (Heer and Huffman, 1954, pp.270-271, cf. Torry, 2010, p. 72).

In England at this time, similar concerns about the church's engagement with the working class resulted in the establishment of workplace chaplaincies, of which the two most significant were the South London Industrial Mission and the Sheffield Industrial Mission (Torry, 2010, pp. ix, 30). The underlying theology of these missions was that of 'getting alongside' (p. 48), with "industrial mission in Britain [following] the fortunes of the [French] worker priests closely" (p. 72). In Sheffield, the Director, Ted Wickham, had worked in industry prior to ordination. In 1941, he became a chaplain at a factory making bombs and shells, in the process becoming one of the C of E clergy best "fitted to a pioneer ministry in industry" (Torry, 2010, p. 59). His priority was forming relationships with as many different people as possible, all the while discussing "relevant Christian insights" (p. 60). Rather than taking people out of the world into the church, he wanted them to stay put, to help in the task of changing the

workplace for the better (p. 61), because a chaplain was not actually in the position of a worker, and so “the creation of an informed and active laity was a priority” (pp. 64-65). Wickham, however, was dismissive of the parish system, and “never tried to build a bridge between industry and the Church” (Torry, 2010, p. 64) so this initiative did not have lasting impact on the wider church. In South London, it was seen as desirable for worker priests to remain “parochial clergy, firmly related to the Church as it was” (p. 73), so that they remained connected. This led to the establishment of the Southwark Ordination Course by Bishop Stockwood, with its aim of ordaining working men *[sic]* as NSMs (p. 75).

The problem both for the industrial missions and for the NSMs was that congregations wanted traditional priests, who would focus full-time on the parish (Mantle, 2000, p. 128). One worker priest, Jack Strong, who worked as a miner in Kent while also being vicar of a parish, found that “[c]onservative attitudes among a middle class contingent in the village ensured the end of the experiment” (Torry, 2010, p. 74; Francis and Francis, 1998, p. 299). The PCC of Strong’s church complained to the bishop, essentially because of “a conflict of interests where ... the realities of mission and ministry were bound up with a gospel and a priesthood that had to take incarnational risks in theory and practice”, while “the bishop, for the sake of the survival of the institutional church and the territorial parish” saw it as more important to avoid such risks (Mantle, 2000, p. 135). The result was that Strong was removed.

During the 1970s, a number of men were ordained as NSMs. These were people who were already working, mainly in middle-class professional jobs, which they continued post-ordination. The main impetus for this appears to have been filling gaps in the church, while recognising that NSMs in secular employment might have a distinctive ministry in the workplace (Hodge, 1983). Hodge noted, however, that “[s]o far non-stipendiary ministry appears to have made little impact on society at large” because it “is the parochial model which remains dominant in the minds of us all – non-stipendiary and stipendiary clergy, lay Church members, and in society at large”. The consequence was that even those NSMs who did feel that they had a specific ministry in their workplaces found it difficult to sustain, given the social pressure they were under, with many therefore taking “early retirement or transfer to stipendiary ministry” (Hodge, 1983, p. 86).

It was not only in England and France that experiments with NSMs engaged in secular work were tried; indeed, in much of the developing world there was a much greater expectation that clergy would support themselves, as local churches were in no position to do so. However, in Anglican churches the influence of British



missionaries remained strong at least through the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the model they generally supported was of an educated, paid clergy, despite the best efforts of Roland Allen to encourage indigenous ministry (Francis and Francis, 1998, p. 91). In the Church of South India, for example, Newbigin's<sup>17</sup> vision for local indigenous leadership did not really embed itself, failing after his departure. Keeping secular work going while also contributing to ministry was a problem for some, while others found that pastorate committees were not supportive of those they deemed inadequately educated, and whose social class and life-style were not what they expected of their clergy (Wingate, 1984, p. 107). When the New Zealand Anglican church tried to introduce community priests, mainly of Maori ethnicity, they found that although "cooperative ministry, natural human communities, and ministry diversity, all illustrate ways in which community priests can indeed be 'of the people'" that the structures and understanding of ministry, inherited primarily from England, tended "to mould rather relentlessly, in other directions" (Gilberd, 1986, p. 131).

The issues faced by the post-war generation of worker priests and industrial missions, the NSMs of the 1970s in England, and the experience of similar experiments in ministry in other countries, demonstrate that ambiguity about the PSW vocation is not new: was it about engaging with people in the workplace, and if so, how? or was it actually about dealing with shortages in parish ministry? Mantle (2000, p. 273) concluded that post-war, "the institutional church spoke relentlessly about mission in an industrial society, and then assessed effort and measured success by filled pews and growing territorial parishes there for everyone – if only they would come in". He assessed the C of E's ecclesiology as disabling, preventing "it from engaging with a post-Christian culture", and that "the story of Britain's first worker-priests, and those who supported them in and outside the parishes, was, and remains a judgment [*sic*] and challenge" (p. 273).

Neither the worker priest nor the NSM in secular employment were able to embed their form of priestly ministry in the institutional church. The worker priests conceptualised their ministry as one of presence, walking alongside ordinary working men and, in some cases, women, but failed to take the institutional church with them; the NSMs struggled with working out what their priestly identity meant in their workplaces, other than through pastoral care or leading Bible studies or prayer groups, with the result that many transferred into FTS ministry or took early

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<sup>17</sup> Bishop of Madurai Diocese, 1947-1959

retirement from their secular work in order to prioritise their parish ministry (Hodge, 1983, pp.62-68).

### 6.3 The *saeculum*

Originally, the *saeculum* was a unit of time: the lifetime of a city, or a generation. During the first century BCE, Augustus defined it as a period of 110 years, initiating the start of a new *saeculum* with the *Ludi Saeculares* (Secular Games). In 47 CE, Claudius redefined the *saeculum* as a period of 100 years. The Secular Games were not necessarily held every 110 or 100 years, however, but were a means by which a new emperor could assert the authority of a new dynasty, a new age (Dunning, 2017). By the time of Augustine, in the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE, Christians were using *saeculum* to denote this age, the period between Pentecost and the Parousia. Augustine divided history (time since the Fall) into six *saecula*, or ages, corresponding to the six days of creation, but the ultimate significance of the incarnation collapses the previous five ages into one, so that there is the time of promise, and the time of fulfilment (Markus, 1970, pp. 17-18). This age, the age of the church, is characterised as the period of *civitas terrena* (the city of the earth) and *civitas Dei* (the city of God), symbolised by the twin cities of Babylon and Jerusalem (Brians, 2016). Augustine used the parable of the wheat and tares (Matthew 13.24-30) to explain the relationship between the *civitas terrena* and the *civitas Dei*, that they were different in nature, but inseparable during this age: they are thus eschatological categories (Markus, 1970, p. 62). This is in contrast to apocalyptic interpretations of the church “surrounded by an alien and hostile world in the midst of which it [constitutes] the elect” (p. 55).

According to Williams (2016, loc 2581), Augustine was not suggesting that there are “two distinct kinds of human association, the sacred and the secular, or even the private and the public”, but that his focus was “the goal of human life as such”. While both cities will experience the “same vicissitudes of earth life and make use of the same temporal goods” (loc 2581, cf. *De civitate*, Book XVIII, 54), they are destined for different ends. It is in the *civitas Dei* that human beings can offer themselves to God, which for Augustine is their *raison d’être*, whereas in the *civitas terrena*, human beings are subject to the coercive power of fallen people and institutions (cf. loc 2608-2726). I return to this in section 6.4.

#### **What is sacred? What is secular?**

An exploration of what it means in God’s world to distinguish between ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’ will contribute to understanding what it means to a PSW to engage in “seeking ... God in God’s world”, as one of the interviewees put it. In the *saeculum*,

the *civitas terrena* and the *civitas Dei* cannot be separated, so the 'secular', meaning 'of this age', and the 'sacred' cannot be separated either. The opposite of 'sacred' should therefore be 'profane', meaning 'outside the temple' (cf. Japhet, 1998, p. 62) rather than 'secular'.

The fundamental intertwining of the sacred with the everyday is illustrated by a diary entry of Etty Hillesum, a Jew from a non-religious family in Amsterdam, who died at the age of 29 in Auschwitz. She wrote about finding herself "suddenly ... kneeling on the brown coconut matting in the bathroom, my head hidden in my dressing gown, which was slung over the broken cane chair" (Woodhouse, 2009, pp. 40-41). For her, this was a source of embarrassment, "because of the critical, rational, atheistic bit that is part of me as well", and yet "every so often I have a great urge to kneel down with my face in my hands and in this way to find some peace and to listen to that hidden source within me". Sacred moments can happen in the most unlikely places, not least in places normally deemed 'secular'. In a recent *Church Times* article, Poole (2018, p. 16) wrote: "Because God made the world, and Christ redeemed it, there can be no secularity", using the examples of St Paul and the Unknown God at the Areopagus (Acts 17.16-34), the "rebranding" of Eostre as Easter, and "the conversion of the goddess Brigid to a saint" to illustrate "the Christian tradition of baptising the secular to claim it for God".

The existence of 'a secular' which needs baptising in order to claim it for God suggests, however, that, rather than there being no secularity, the distinction between sacred and secular needs further exploration. Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Otto (1959) coined the word 'numinous' from the Latin *numen* indicating the divine (presence, will), asserting that 'numinous' cannot be strictly defined, as it is an "absolutely primary and elementary datum" (p. 21), but it can be experienced (p. 25). The numinous is wholly other, not to be reduced to anything else, but is simultaneously mysterious, terrifying and fascinating (pp. 39-49). Following Otto, Eliade (1959, p. 20), claimed that the experience of holy ground means that space is not homogeneous, and that there is on the one hand sacred space, which is "a strong, significant space", and on the other, spaces which "are not sacred and so are without structure or consistency" and are "amorphous". He contrasted sacred space, which provides "orientation in the chaos of homogeneity" with profane space, which is entirely relative (p. 23).

Lynch critiqued theories such as Eliade's on the grounds that they tend to result in reductive explanations of phenomena, often not distinguishing adequately between sacred and religious, and consequently do not provide for the many forms which the sacred can take in human experience (Lynch, 2012, pp.16-17). In recognising as

sacred what someone, in a particular place at a particular time, deems sacred, Lynch replaced *a priori* conceptualisations of the sacred with a contextual approach. This need not be purely individual: Lynch (p. 133) described what he called a “cultural approach” as a means of communicating human experience of the transcendent through “specific symbols, ... patterns of thought, emotions, and actions grounded in the body, which recursively reproduce the sacrality of that particular sacred form”, and which then draw people together in collective experience.

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was common, in the secular west at least, to assert that an object or place is not sacred in and of itself, as Eliade claimed, but is sacred only if someone claims that for it (cf. Durkheim, for whom “the sacred is produced by human activities”, Crockford, 2017, p. 96). This is indicative of a post-modern tendency to minimise, ignore or refute any claims for absolutes, which, Orsi (2005, p. 12) claimed, results in a “deep antipathy between modern cultures all over the world and the practice and experience of sacred presence”. Such antipathy allows what is sacred in people’s lives to be deliberately ignored, with sacred stories rejected as a framework through which they can tell their own stories. Orsi illustrated this in his account of going into an Italian Catholic community in the USA, similar to that in which he had been brought up, to study the phenomenon of prayer to St Jude. Initially, he congratulated himself on being there to listen to people’s stories, but soon found himself wondering how much “these people” actually cared what he thought of their stories or their spirituality (pp. 147-148). Eventually he was challenged by a worshipper: “Have *you* even prayed to Saint Jude?” (p. 148, original italics), because if not, how could he understand?

Orsi found himself caught between a world which he thought he understood, but of which he was no longer a part, and the academic world which wanted to liberate people from regressive, dependent views. He argued that such notions of liberation misunderstand the nature of religion, which is not about finding meaning, but about the relationship between heaven and earth, expressed through practices like that of praying to St Jude (p. 150). This is similar to Walton’s (2015) argument that spiritual life writing is a means of reclaiming an ancient practice, referencing Augustine’s *Confessions*, for new purposes. “An embodied and relational self does not seek to life [*sic*] itself beyond this messy, complicated world, but rather seeks to adore the sacred within its blemished beauty”, (p. 20) because “the sacred [*is*] incarnate within the particular, the intimate and the domestic” (p.25).

Where Eliade had focused on sacred space, claiming that the church marks the boundary between sacred and profane, Markus (1970), basing his analysis on Augustine’s concept of the *saeculum*, saw time as more fundamental, defining

“sacred history as the story of God’s saving work, secular history as all the rest, all that is left, so to speak, when we subtract from history the strand singled out as ‘sacred’” (p. 11). In the *saeculum*, “we must be content with the provisional, the ultimately ambiguous, the ‘secular’; for the ultimates are here inextricably intertwined, and must not be prematurely unravelled” (p. 173). The church is thus as sacred or profane as the world, because both are ‘secular’, meaning ‘of this age’, prior to the *eschaton*. Because the *civitas Dei* exists both within and without the church, God’s work in the world is only partly carried out in the church, so while the church proclaims God’s kingdom, it is not that kingdom, and cannot grow into that kingdom of itself. Here the church is very much part of this age, rather than being seen as the threshold between this age and the age to come.

Williams claimed that living a religious life is not about being spiritual, but is a life in which God is acknowledged, and in which a narrative in which God appears is acceptable among other narratives (Williams, 2012, p. 319). The church is then the body of people who celebrate the God who has revealed Godself to them in the person of Jesus Christ, and who, in so doing, makes present a space called the kingdom of God (pp. 92-93). A secular space is one in which such narratives are not accepted, and which will not privilege any “authority that is not accountable to ordinary processes of reasoning and evidence” (p. 2); it is a space in which nothing is “beyond challenge and critique” (p. 23). For Williams, the difference between understanding an event as sacred or secular then depends on whether we interpret it functionally – what you see is what you get – or whether we are prepared to allow that there may be more to it than what we currently perceive or understand (so art, for instance, is not secular and is always more than its creator intended, p. 13). In a functionalist world-view, there is no need for a religious register at all; there is, however, the danger of losing any sense that people and things can exist for what they are in themselves, and so are more than the means to an end (p. 92).

I use ‘secular’ in PSW to qualify the work the PSW does which is outside the institutional church, but I also claim that the PSW’s ‘secular work’ contributes to the *missio Dei* (chapter 9). The church, in its earthly form in this age, is both sacred and secular: it is the body of Christ, but also a human institution. Eliade (1959, p. 25) conceptualised the church as the threshold between this age and the next, the gate-keeper in effect, and as a sacred space open to heaven, symbolised by Jacob’s ladder (p. 26, cf. Genesis 28.12-19). This metaphor acknowledges that the church is both connected to earth, and connected to heaven. While I feel this metaphor does carry some weight, I find Williams’ argument (2012, p. 306), that the church “is ... the trustee of a vision”, one, however, by which it “cannot begin to claim that it

consistently lives”, more persuasive. In this age, the perfection that Eliade’s metaphor suggests is not possible, and so the church’s vocation is to notice and proclaim God’s presence in the here and now. This is discussed, as an aspect of the vocation of the PSW, in section 7.3.

### ***Theology of place***

“To know who you are is to be oriented in moral space” (Taylor, 1989, p. 28), by which Taylor meant a space in which we work out the difference between “good or bad, what is worth doing and what not, what has meaning and importance ... and what is trivial and secondary”. Taylor continued that our moral orientation is one way in which we answer questions about who we are, because we are framed by our commitments (such as Catholic or anarchist) and by our identifications (such as Armenian or Québécois), but “our identity is deeper and more many-sided than any of our possible articulations of it”: “our identities define the space of qualitative distinctions within which we live and choose” (pp. 29-30). The place and the community in which we live contribute to our identities.

### ***Space and place: Dasein***

‘Space’ and ‘place’ are not the same. Where ‘space’ is ‘out there’ and infinite, ‘place’ is ‘in here’, local, significant, and familiar: “[s]paces are what are filled with places” (Inge, 2003, p. 2); “[w]hen space feels thoroughly familiar to us, it has become place” (Tuan, 1977, p. 73). This underlies Heidegger’s concept of *Dasein*, often translated into English by the word ‘existence’, but with a spatial nuance of ‘being there’ or ‘presence’, which ‘existence’ does not really encompass. It is the word used by Heidegger for specifically human existence or being, and refers to “the inherently social being who ... operates with a pre-theoretical grasp of the *a priori* structures that make possible particular modes of Being”, which “realize some form of presence ... to human beings” (Wheeler, 2011). *Dasein* dwells in the world in the way that we dwell in our homes, places which are familiar, where we belong: “[i]t is in this sense that *Dasein* is (essentially) in the world” (Wheeler, 2011). Inge (2003) claimed that Heidegger’s *Dasein* is “rooted in time and space. Man [*sic*] is not a subject apart from the world ..., but an integral, immersed member” (p. 18, quoting Seamon, 1984, p. 45<sup>18</sup>).

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<sup>18</sup> Seamon, M (1984) in Richardson, M (ed) *Place: Experience and Symbol*. Baton Rouge: Department of Geography and Anthropology, Louisiana State University.

Interestingly, Heidegger linked *Dasein* with *Logos* (cf. John 1.1-14), through the concept of 'being present' (Heidegger, 1958, p. 101). Inge (2003) did not mention this, although he did focus on Heidegger's concept of 'dwelling', linking it with the etymology of *bauen*, which in Old English and High German meant 'to dwell', and which is now a German word for 'building' (p. 19). In John 1.14, we are told that the *Logos* became flesh and dwelt among us. *Dasein* thus embodies existence not as an abstract concept, but as a rooted human being, who dwells in a specific place at a specific time with other human beings: 'place' is what gives Heidegger's *Dasein* its sense of rooted identity.

### *Place in the Bible*

Place is a significant theme in the Pentateuch, from the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3), to Abram's journey from Ur of the Chaldees to become Abraham, the father of a great nation in the land of the promise in Canaan (Genesis 12-18); from the migration to Egypt (Genesis 37-50) to the exodus and wilderness period (the content of the other four books of the Pentateuch), followed by resettlement in the Promised Land (Numbers 34, cf. Joshua 2-12). The historical validity of these accounts is irrelevant to the argument here, which is that place is a key concept. This is reinforced in the accounts of the loss of first the land occupied by the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel to the Assyrians in the mid 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE (2 Kings 15-18), followed by the loss of independence of the remaining two tribes of the Kingdom of Judah to Babylon in the early 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE (2 Kings 25); both of these resulted in a substantial proportion of the governing classes at least being taken into exile. Not surprisingly, the exodus, wilderness wanderings, and the exile are highly significant in the biblical narrative, but the periods of settlement in the land were not without their problems either. By the time of Solomon, a "bureaucratic state built upon coercion in which free citizens were enslaved for state goals" had been established (Brueggemann, 1978, p. 10, cf. 1 Kings 9.15-23), and in Nehemiah's account of the return to the land, the author lamented that Israel was still not independent, with foreign rulers having "power also over our bodies and over our livestock at their pleasure" (Nehemiah 9.36-37, cf. Brueggemann, 1978, pp.12-13).

In the Hebrew scriptures, Yahweh was the God who went with Israel in the wilderness, actualised in the ark of the covenant, and was the God of the promised land, actualised by Yahweh's presence in the temple. The fall of Jerusalem in 587 or 586 BCE, with the loss of the temple, meant that Israel had to wrestle with what that meant in terms of Yahweh's presence with them (cf. Psalm 137). For the early Christians, that question was answered in the person of Jesus Christ (eg. Mark 13, John 2.18-22), whose one complete sacrifice rendered void the Hebrew sacrificial

system (eg. Hebrews 10.1-18). The incarnation affirmed the significance of the particular in both place and time (eg. Inge, 2003, p. 52, cf. John 1.14). Nevertheless, Jerusalem remained a potent eschatological symbol (Inge, 2003, p. 56, cf. Revelation 21, Hebrews 12.22-24), and place was still significant (eg. John 14.1-6). This is exemplified by the explicit geographical locations provided for key events, such as the disciples' meeting with the risen Lord on the road to Emmaus<sup>19</sup> (Luke 24.13-35), and the apostle Paul's dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9.3-9).

### *Sacred space*

For modern urban dwellers, the concept of 'place' has become problematic. When every town centre has the same stores, and every shopping mall and Macdonald's restaurant look the same, place loses its particularity, and begins to revert to undifferentiated space (cf. Inge, 2003, p. 12). The loss of distinctive space in our towns and cities, rapid travel, and instantaneous 24/7 global news, have all contributed to changing what 'local' means, as has the irrelevance of locality on the internet. We see this played out globally in the difficulties governments experience in trying to tax multi-national giants such as Amazon and Google<sup>20</sup>.

There are resonances here with Eliade's (1959) distinction between sacred space, which is oriented and heterogeneous, and profane space, which is amorphous and chaotic. Perhaps our need to locate ourselves against a background of lack of location is one explanation for the proliferation of roadside memorials in recent years, marking the spot where a fatality occurred. This may also in part explain the popularity of forms of spirituality which emphasise 'thin places', which are deemed particularly sacred (eg. Sledge, 2014). Inge (2003, pp. 78-79), therefore, asked whether some places are more likely to be places where God reveals Godself, or to be boundary places "between the material world and the other world". His answer was that it is not that some places are intrinsically more likely to be places of revelation, but that, conversely, the revelation of God, or an experience of God, could lead to some places being deemed sacred.

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<sup>19</sup> It is ironic therefore that on a recent pilgrimage to the Holy Land (autumn 2017), we were told by our guide that three villages lay claim to be the Emmaus in Luke's gospel. We went to modern Abu-Ghosh.

<sup>20</sup> See reports on the 2018 UK Budget, for instance, such as <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/budget-2018-amazon-google-facebook-tax-tech-giant-philip-hammond-a8607336.html>, accessed 14 November 2018.



This begs the question, however, as to what we mean by ‘sacred space’ or a ‘sacred place’. Eliade’s concept of profane space as without orientation and chaotic derives from his argument that primitive societies believed that outside the known world was chaos<sup>21</sup>. The ritual of taking a land, as exemplified in the biblical account of ancient Israel’s arrival in the Promised Land, or by 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century Christians from Spain and Portugal in the Americas, is therefore highly significant, taking what was profane and enabling it to become sacred (Eliade, 1959, pp. 31-32). Once a space becomes sacred, it can operate as a point of communication between earth and heaven, like Jacob’s ladder (p. 42); ground becomes holy when it provides a way to reach heaven (p. 39).

Narratives like these, however, ignore the contested nature of sacred space: contemporary Jerusalem is a prime example of this (Sheldrake, 2001, p. 5), similarly, the conquest of the Americas can be recast as a story of exploitation of, and atrocity against, the indigenous peoples. European invaders took sacred sites in the Americas with no consideration that they might be committing sacrilege in the eyes of the people already living there. While such groups are not a single entity, but consist of many tribes, with different customs and attitudes to current white settlement, Native Americans agree about “a history of trauma and oppression, explicit and premeditated genocide followed by cultural genocide, resource appropriation, and broken agreements” (Crockford, 2017, p. 90-91). Crockford described how Sedona, Arizona, was considered sacred by the Yavapai, a Native American tribe “who occupied the land and were forcibly removed by the American army to make space for the white settlers who came from the late 19th century”. The Yavapai, who still live in the area, “are concerned they will not be able to access the land for ritual use” because of development brought about by white Americans seeking spiritual experience, and the resulting tourist industry. Sacred space is thus not a simple concept: a space may be considered sacred by different people for different reasons, perhaps resulting in conflict over the space.

There is also a tension between seeing somewhere as holy, perhaps because of its association with a particular holy person or an experience of God’s self-revelation,

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<sup>21</sup> In Genesis 1, “the earth was a formless void” prior to God’s creative action of sending a wind “over the face of the waters”.

Images of sea monsters were common on early maps, indicating “there’s bad stuff out there”, but apparently the phrase ‘here be dragons’ is only found on two globes, both dating from the early 16th century. Roman and mediaeval cartographers used *hic sunt leones* for unknown territories. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Here\\_be\\_dragons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Here_be_dragons), accessed 14 November 2018.

and remembering that God is not to be confined or bounded, and is always free to act somewhere else (cf. Sheldrake, 2001, p. 30). As the angel said to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary on the day of resurrection, “He is not here; ... tell his disciples, ‘... he is going ahead of you’” (Matthew 28.6-7). Because in Christian belief, the sacred is located fundamentally in Jesus, place *per se* is less significant than the experience of God that occurs there (Sheldrake, 2001, p. 38).

### ***Theology of work***

Another important contributor to our sense of who we are comes from our work. Dorothy Sayers (1947, p. 54-55) argued that the natural function of humans made in the image of God is to work, and it should therefore be considered primary. Similarly, Alain de Botton (2009, p. 30) celebrated work as “a hymn to the intelligence, peculiarity, beauty and horror of the modern workplace and, not least, its extraordinary claim to be able to provide us, alongside love, with the principal source of life’s meaning”. If such claims have any substance, then work should be a major focus for theology. The centrality of work to human life has not, however, until recently, been reflected in the numbers of studies of the theology of work, although following Vatican II and *Laborem exercens* (John Paul II, 1981) it has gained importance (eg. Volf, 1991; Cosden, 2004; Larive, 2004; Hughes, 2007; Loftin and Dimsdale, 2018).

Work is always to an extent functional, and it is also necessarily formative for the person doing it, but what *Laborem exercens* claimed was that work is far more than this, because it involves human co-creation with God. Key issues for a theology of work to consider, therefore, are the purpose of work and how it might contribute to the transformation of this age through the *missio Dei*. Is it reasonable to claim that our work matters because it is a gift from God, and it is the means by which we are transformed as we work with God in transforming God’s creation (cf. Larive, 2004, p. 155), or is this over-stating the case?

### ***Work in the Bible***

The Bible is ambivalent about work, on the one hand deeming it good, given by God (Genesis 2.15), but on the other, as sweat and toil (Genesis 3.19, cf. Volf, 1991; Larive, 2004).

In the Ancient Near East, labour was not seen as worthy of the divine, and the account of creation in the first chapters of Genesis is quite atypical (Bergsma, 2018, pp.12-13). God’s work in creation establishes the value of work, and the value of rest, and so it is reasonable to see this as the rhythm for the human beings made in

God's image (Genesis 1.26-27), given that the "Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it" (Genesis 2.15). Some theologians, using etymological studies, understand this to mean that Adam was given priestly status and that his work was primarily worship (eg. Bergsma, 2018, pp.16-18);

Brueggemann, on the other hand, takes the words at face-value, seeing Adam's work as that of a shepherd or gardener (1982, p. 46). Either way, with his expulsion from Eden, Adam's work is reduced to toil, as is reinforced in the story of Cain, when God refuses to accept his offering, and work becomes drudgery (Genesis 4.3-5, 12). With the migration to Egypt, and the subsequent enslavement of the Israelites, work is not simply toil and drudgery, but hard labour, with no possibility of sabbath rest (Exodus 5).

The restoration of the people in the wilderness also restores work as a blessing (eg. Exodus 31.1-11), as the people are given detailed instructions by God to make the ark of the covenant (Exodus 25) and the tabernacle (Exodus 26), both signifying God's presence with the people. In the wilderness, ordinances were given to Moses, and a core theme of Leviticus is that because God is holy, so the people of Israel were to be holy (Leviticus 11.45), shaped by their obedience to those ordinances. In Leviticus, we can see what God wants for God's people in their working lives: access to meaningful work in which humans cooperate with God, ensuring that everyone has enough (eg. Leviticus 19.9-10), and where there is provision for distorted relationships to be restored (eg. Leviticus 6.4-5, 19.18, cf. Stallman, 2013). Indeed, Stallman claimed that "Leviticus is central to Jesus' teaching about work" for that very reason.

It is difficult to find much about Jesus' attitude to work in theological literature, however. While we know that Jesus said he needed to do the work for which his Father had sent him (eg. John 9.4), and that this occupied the three years of his public ministry, it is easy to miss the fact that he must have spent many years prior to that working as a carpenter (Mark 6.3). Jesus used examples from everyday work in his parables, such as a farmer who sowed seed (Matthew 13.1-23), a shepherd who looked for a lost sheep (Luke 15.3-7), builders who built on sand and on rock (Luke 6.46-49), vineyard workers (Matthew 20.1-16), and many others. However, while Jesus took it for granted that his hearers would recognise such working contexts, in the Sermon on the Mount he warned against putting undue priority on daily concerns, such as what to eat and drink, and what to wear, illustrating his point with the lilies of the field which "neither toil nor spin" (Matthew 6.25-33).

Work is largely incidental in the rest of the New Testament, although according to Taylor (2018, p. 49) it is a key theme in 1 Thessalonians:

You remember our labour and toil, brothers and sisters; we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. (1 Thessalonians 2.9)

We know from Paul's own writings, and from Acts, that at times he supported himself by working with his hands (eg. Acts 18.1-3; 20.33-35; Philippians 4.14-16), urging others to do the same (1 Thessalonians 4.11). In 2 Thessalonians 3.6-15, the readers are exhorted to follow Paul's example in not being a burden on anyone, but rather to work to support themselves (the authorship of 2 Thessalonians is disputed, eg. Foster, 2012, p. 150; Giblin, 1968, p. 871, but this does not detract from the point made). Paul both worked himself, and expected others to do the same, so that in contributing to ministry and evangelism, he and his companions were not burdens on anyone else.

### *Work in the Christian tradition*

Work was perceived as important in the monastic tradition, although the rationale behind that varied. Benedict's Rule for monks living communally dates from the 6<sup>th</sup> century<sup>22</sup>, and recommends a regular rhythm of prayer, sacred reading, manual work and rest. Manual work was included to ensure that the monks were not idle ("the enemy of the soul"), and so that they could "live by the labour of their hands, as did our Father and the Apostles" (Butler, 1935, pp.68-69).

Aquinas gave four reasons for human work (*Summa Theologiae*, 1920, II-II, Q.187.A3): to obtain food, to avoid the idleness which is a cause of sin, to restrain oneself from lust and desire, and for almsgiving. Like Benedict, he favoured a regular regimen of work and prayer in monastic life, where the work could be manual labour, administration, teaching, or writing. Work was what a person did to obtain the necessities which would allow him [*sic*] to contemplate God, and a means of subduing the passions which might keep him from God, and so was a means to an end, not an end in itself. The contemplative life, on the other hand, "is simply more excellent than the active ... [because] the active life is occupied with externals" and "the contemplative life is more delightful than the active" (*Summa Theologiae*, 1920, II-II, Q.182, A.3,4).

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<sup>22</sup> The attribution of the Rule to St Benedict is "relatively certain", but its date cannot be given more precisely than 530-560 (*Introduction to the Rule of Saint Benedict*, Abbot Primate Jerome Theisen, <http://www.osb.org/gen/rule.html>, accessed 1 October 2018).

A key factor in the Protestant Reformation was *sola fide*, Luther's assertion that justification before God is by faith alone, and that we cannot work our way into the kingdom of God. All vocations are then equal, with the cloister no better than anywhere else, because all are called to share Christ's earthly ministry, serving others out of love, whether by milking cows, cutting hay, or cooking meals (Larive, 2004, p. 25). In this way, Luther linked the daily work of every Christian with their divine calling (Volf, 1991, p. 106).

A search on the C of E website for 'work' leads to links featuring the work of the C of E or General Synod, or working together or with others. Using the key phrase 'secular employment' provides a link to the criteria by which MSEs are to be selected (Ministry Division, 2017). This document acknowledges that there are people who experience a call to ordained ministry which will be predominantly focused on the workplace, and that such people affirm "that work itself can be a form of discipleship", that they "keep the church better informed about the world of work", and "are better able to minister to those in congregations who are in work". Furthermore, "MSEs undertake an important if often invisible aspect of mission by affirming God's concern for every part of creation". The document then goes on to summarise the work of the MSE as pastoral, prophetic, evangelistic and a means of teaching – all concerns of the institutional church, which omit any specific reference to the impact of the MSEs' secular work on the *missio Dei*. The LICC website, on the other hand, has 'work' as one of its main links, taking the reader straight through to a page entitled 'Your Work Matters to God', which hosts a number of different links and articles (London Institution for Contemporary Christianity, n.d.).

Neither work as a means to the leisure to contemplate God (Aquinas), nor work as vocation (Luther), considers the effect of human work on the creation and on us, and neither does the C of E's website, with its focus on the church's ministry. One contemporary source I have been able to find that acknowledges issues such as the contribution of work to the *missio Dei*, or the effect of work on the individual and on society, is the LICC's website. The other is the Theology of Work project's website, which hosts a range of "biblical, theological, and pastoral material related to work"<sup>23</sup>.

### *Work as an eschatological category*

Over 70 years ago, Sayers (1947, p. 47) asserted that work should be "a way of life in which the nature of man [*sic*] should find its proper exercise and delight and so fulfil

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.theologyofwork.org/about>, accessed 20 February 2019.

itself to the glory of God". She went on to affirm that work should be seen as "a creative activity undertaken for the love of the work itself; and that man, made in God's image, should make things, as God makes them, for the sake of doing well a thing that is well worth doing". However, in both Catholic and Protestant theology, prior to the final decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, work, despite its importance in all our lives, was considered to be a secondary category, a means to an end. Change was signalled when John Paul II claimed that "human work is *a key*, probably *the essential key*, to the whole social question, if we try to see that question really from the point of view of man's *[sic]* good ... [T]he key, namely human work, [thus] acquires fundamental and decisive importance" (*Laborem exercens*, John Paul II, 1981, para 3, original italics).

The first key reference in the 20<sup>th</sup> century for a theology of work, however, is Barth's *Church Dogmatics* III/4, published in 1951, which concerns the doctrine of creation (Hughes, 2007, p. 12). Barth placed work within the doctrine of creation under the heading of sabbath, so that sabbath is a pre-condition for work, not simply about rest after work. Human work was not to be understood as an extension of God's creation, however, since God's work is always complete (cf. Hauerwas, 1995).

The first person to present anything like a comprehensive theology of work was the worker priest, Chenu <sup>24</sup> (1963), who claimed, without citing his evidence, that the term came into use "five or six years ago" (p. 3), arguing that "traditional images of potter, blacksmith and peasant" were both inadequate and "often encouraged a resentment against the machine and led to debatable praise of craft-working, small-scale proprietorship, the patriarchal family and the peasantry, which is both bad theology and vain romanticism" (p. 6). Work is not simply about earning a living, but is also a means by which we serve one another (p. 10). Although work is of value in itself, it "is not, of course, an end in itself in which man *[sic]* finds his final achievement, as in a Marxist dictatorship of the proletariat" (p. 22). For Chenu, work was neither "a means of perfection, nor a mere collection of utilities, advantages and prosperities which pious intentions will endow with morality", but "is a purpose in its rightful place, a secondary purpose" (p. 22).

Chenu experienced at first-hand what it was like to work in dehumanising conditions, where the worker was simply another cog in the machine. He considered such work to be "degrading" and against God's purposes, because the focus was on the product

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<sup>24</sup> He is also credited with "being the grandfather of the liberation theology movement", [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie-Dominique\\_Chenu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie-Dominique_Chenu), accessed 19 September 2018.

at the expense of the worker (Chenu, 1963, p. 5). It is ironic, therefore, that Chenu was among the French worker priests suppressed in 1953 because they were deemed to be communists. Despite this, in the 1960s he was one of the theologians whose work informed Vatican II, and his views on work are echoed by John Paul II in *Laborem exercens* (1981, cf. John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*, 1991, para 31). Chenu's theology of work opened the way to creation being seen as continuous, rather than completed, and of human work understood as co-creation with God (cf. Hughes, 2007, p. 17).

*Laborem exercens* built on Chenu's argument, while avoiding his rather "uncritical celebration of technology, modernity and progress" (Hughes, 2007, p. 17). *Laborem exercens*, however, arguably romanticised toil by claiming it as participation in Christ's suffering (para 27), and did not consider the role of sabbath at all.

Nevertheless, the concept of co-creation, originated by Chenu, and an important aspect of *Laborem exercens*, has featured in much subsequent theological discussion of work. Hauerwas (1995, p. 109), however, was highly critical of this, seeing *Laborem exercens* as "a disaster both in the general perspective it takes toward work as well as its specific arguments". Arguing that "the theological analysis of work is deficient, and [that] this results in a social and economic theory that systematically distorts the nature and significance of work in most people's lives", he deemed John Paul II's understanding of work to be "theologically arbitrary, romantic, elitist, and certainly an insufficient basis for an adequate social theory or critique" (p. 109). Hauerwas critiqued what he saw as the exclusive use of Genesis 1-3 in *Laborem exercens* for its scriptural basis, which is somewhat unfair, as there are other biblical references. Like Barth, Hauerwas argued that God completed his work prior to the Fall and so human work is of a different order.

In *Work in the Spirit*, Volf (1991, p.7) wanted to do for a Protestant theology of work what *Laborem exercens* had done for a Catholic theology of work. Alert to the need to avoid romanticising work, he claimed that "theology of work is a critical theological reflection onto the reality of human work" (p. 25), where that reality includes child labour, unemployment, discrimination, dehumanisation, exploitation, and the effects of all these on the environment (pp. 36-42). This reality is multi-layered, affecting both individuals and society more generally; it is both structural and technological (pp. 43-45). Volf considered that an inductive approach, starting from the Bible, was problematic because work is never considered as a primary theme – there is a difference between biblical teaching about work and a theology of work – and the context of work in the modern age is so very different from that of past ages (p. 77). Having been a student of Moltmann's, Volf followed his eschatological focus in

locating the theology of work in the new creation, seeing the task as not simply interpreting work from a Christian perspective, but showing how it can be transformed by the Spirit for the new creation (cf. Moltmann, 2002, p. 79).

For both Volf and *Laborem exercens* (Volf, 1991, pp.89-92; John Paul II, 1981, para 25), the fundamental question is whether there is continuity between this present age and the age to come: if there is a radical discontinuity, then nothing now is of ultimate significance, including work, other than in how it fits us for participation in the new creation; if on the other hand, there is continuity of some kind, implying eschatological transformation rather than annihilation, then work does have ultimate significance. There are echoes here of Irenaeus' refutation of gnostic heresies of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries: "neither is the substance nor the essence of the creation annihilated (for faithful and true is He who has established it)" (Irenaeus, 1885, V.36.1). If we take it as given, that whatever is worthwhile of this age will be transformed rather than annihilated in the age to come, then our work matters.

Theologically work can be grounded protologically or eschatologically (Volf, 1991, p. 100). Volf preferred an eschatological basis on the grounds that Christianity is essentially eschatological because the new creation is the *telos* of the first creation, and because human work does not simply maintain what God creates, but transforms it through the work of the Holy Spirit (pp. 101-102). The vocation of the Christian (pp. 111-114) should not to be reduced to church-based activity, but is about using the gifts of the Spirit in daily work. The work of non-Christians will also be transformed, since it "has in principle the same ultimate significance as the work of Christians: insofar as the results of non-Christians' work pass through the purifying judgment of God, they too, will contribute to the future new creation" (Volf, 1991, p. 118, cf. Revelation 21.24, 26). At its best, work "is not only good in the sense that it is useful or something to enjoy; it is also good as being something worthy": work is good for human beings because "through work man [*sic*] *not only transforms nature*, adapting it to his own needs, but he also *achieves fulfilment* as a human being and indeed, in a sense, becomes "more a human being" (*Laborem exercens*, John Paul II, 1981, para 9, original italics).

In the biblical texts, as discussed above, work was always part of the divine plan for human beings made in God's image, but, as a consequence of the Fall, is distorted into toil and drudgery. Materialist and utilitarian understandings of human work have tended to focus on nature as a resource for humans (rather than part of God's creation and so sufficient in itself) and work as no more than the means by which humans survive (cf. Cosden, 2018, p. 167; Hauerwas, 1995). A reductive focus on work as toil and drudgery, however, ignores its potential to be so much more, if we



understand our work as an end in itself, not simply the means to some other end (cf. Volf, 1991, p. 91; Cosden, 2018, p. 171). Irenaeus argued that as created beings, humans have to grow into the full likeness of God (1885, IV.38.3), and through their “work ... realize and grow into who they were created to be” (Cosden, 2018, p. 172). Christ shows us how to do that (Irenaeus, 1885, V.16.2).

Utility is at the heart of many issues about work. Where an organisation prioritises its product (cf. Chenu, 1963, p. 5) and efficiency and profit at the expense of its workers’ welfare, then that organisation has set up gods to worship. There is nothing new in this (cf. the Egyptian enslavement of the Israelites), but “it is still plausible to claim that never before has it enjoyed such a triumphant extension to become almost effectively the total worldview of an entire culture as in the modern West” where human worth is “measured in terms of profit and efficiency ... [and] [a]bsolute utility reveals itself as nothing but violent self-interest and nihilism” (Hughes, 2007, p. 219).

Such issues do not prevent us forming a theology of work (*pace* Hauerwas), but barriers do exist. Larive (2004, pp.149-155) listed several which included the perfection which is the enemy of the good, and the expectation that all work will point beyond itself to God, since neither is achievable prior to the *eschaton*. Emphasis on individual salvation ignores the necessity for structures and institutions also to be redeemed. Another issue is the *de facto* inference that the kingdom of God is within the church, with the world outside the church beyond God’s remit; the corollary, that holiness is a church-based virtue, is equally unhelpful. Alongside this is the assumption that church-based work is better than secular work for the Christian disciple, thus devaluing much of what a lay person might contribute to God’s kingdom through their secular work.

Such questions are discussed in chapter 9, using the words of the interviewees to flesh out this picture, while also seeing the potential for human work to transcend barriers, through the work of the Holy Spirit, and so be part of the *missio Dei*.

## 6.4 The church in the *saeculum*

In section 6.1, I outlined the development of the concept of the *missio Dei*, in which the role of the church after Pentecost, but before the Parousia, was an important issue. In this section, I continue this thread.

Writing about Michael Ramsey<sup>25</sup>, Williams (2004) contrasted a “third way” with previous Anglican liberalism and conservatism, seeing the church as “epiphany”: what matters about the Church is not a system of ideas as such ... nor the structure of an organisation competent to deliver authoritative judgements and to require obedience ..., but what the bare fact of the Church *shows*” (pp.89-90, original italics). Williams quoted Ramsey’s claim that the church should be “perceived as the glow of Christ’s incarnate presence” (p. 91, citing Ramsey, M, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*<sup>26</sup>, p. 197). The church *is* the gospel: “to belong in the Church is to know what God wants you to know, because it is to live as God wants you to live” (Williams, 2004, p. 92).

In *Mission and Ministry*, the Faith and Order Advisory Group of the C of E agreed that “the mission of the Son and the Spirit creates the Church and the Church only exists in relation to the *missio Dei*” (Archbishops' Council, 2007b, p. iv). In other words, the church does not have or do mission, it *is* mission: it does not exist for itself, but in order that it may work with God in the world. Given developments in biblical studies and ecumenical engagement, together with significant changes in British society, *Mission and Ministry* therefore asked what kind of ministry would be required for the missionary task before the church in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century (pp. 1-2), recognising that we cannot simply transfer practice in the New Testament to today’s Britain. However, while acknowledging the need for contextual interpretation of scripture, the analysis that followed was based on the threefold order of bishops, priests and deacons, with a separate laity: the implication is that although the church should take account of how life in Britain in general is changing, the basic structure of the church can still be taken as given. It seems in 2007 the church had not yet realised that its self-understanding might also need to be reconsidered.

If the church’s ministry is not the right place to start, then a better place might not be the institutional church at all, but rather God’s work in the world in creation, the *missio Dei* (Pickard, 2009, p. 43). Pickard suggested that a “relational approach to ministry” should be grounded in what we know of God, so that we base our ecclesiology on the Trinity, and only then think about what that implies for the church’s ministry. He claimed that despite much being written and said, “the work of transposition and interweaving of Trinitarian and relational categories into an ecclesiology of ministry remains significantly underdeveloped” (p. 41). Apostolic succession proceeding from

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<sup>25</sup> 1904-1988; former Archbishop of Canterbury (1961-1974).

<sup>26</sup> London: Longman, 1936.

Christ to his apostles and hence to today's bishops (cf. Moberly's analysis, section 6.2) need not be axiomatic, but should be seen as passing to the body of Christ, the whole church. As *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (World Council of Churches, 1982) emphasised, the gifts of the Spirit are given for the whole church, to enable it to participate in the *missio Dei*.

This is far from new:

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified; Receive our supplications and prayers which we offer before thee for all estates of men [*sic*] in thy holy Church, that every member of the same, in his vocation and ministry, may truly serve thee; through our Lord ... (Society of Archbishop Justus, n.d., The Second Collect for Good Friday. 1549 *Book of Common Prayer*, spelling updated)

Bevans and Schroeder (2004, p. 31) argued that the lesson we should learn from The Acts of the Apostles is that the church needs to respond to local contexts, and so it will continually be reinventing itself as it crosses new boundaries. In discussing how the church might go about this, they focused on “the overflowing communion of the *trinitarian God*”, on God's continuing work in creation, and on the centrality of Christ (p. 284, original italics). Bevans and Schroeder located the origin of a renewed emphasis on mission in the church in *Ad gentes*, one of the documents which emerged from Vatican II. A key question motivating Pope John XXIII was ‘What does it mean to be the Church of God in the modern world?’ (eg. McCarthy, 2012). In *Ad gentes*, the *missio Dei* is defined as the self-expression of God the Trinity, flowing out in love to all people, with the church and the church's mission deriving from that (Bevans and Schroeder, 2004, p. 293; Bosch, 1991, pp.10, 390). As a consequence, what is primary is “not simply ... the planting of churches or the saving of souls; rather, it has to be service to the *missio Dei*, representing God in and over against the world, pointing to God” (Bosch, 1991, p. 391).

The corollary of the church's *raison d'être* being mission is that there is need of a sound theology of the laity (Bosch, 1991, p. 472). Christians become part of the *missio Dei* through their baptism, in which they are made part of the eschatological community which is working with the Holy Spirit to redeem creation (Greenwood, 1994, p. 142). Because the entire church represents Christ, the role of the priest is not to work on behalf of the church, but rather to work with people in the church for the community (p. 144). Lay people are not necessarily to be trained as ‘mini-pastors’ (Bosch, 1991, p. 473), but rather the ministry they have in their communities and places of work should be taken seriously. Echoing Augustine's view, that the church

is not co-terminous with the kingdom, Moltmann claimed that mission is “the task of the whole body of Christians, not merely the task of particular officials” because the church “is not in itself the salvation of the world, so that the ‘churchifying’ of the world would mean the latter’s salvation, but it serves the coming salvation of the world” (Moltmann, 2002, p. 312).

### ***Babylon and Jerusalem***

In Revelation, John of Patmos described two cities, which will only be separated at the Parousia. Babylon is a symbol of idolatry, self-glorification and violence (Revelation 18), which although clearly code for Rome, is also a symbol or a parable for any city, nation or institution which is under the threat of death (Stringfellow, 1973, pp.32-33); the new Jerusalem, on the other hand, is symbolic of the redeemed people of God (Revelation 21.1-4). Augustine used Babylon and Jerusalem as types for the two cities of *De civitate Dei*, (*civitas terrena* and *civitas Dei*), which, based on the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13.24-30), are inseparable in the *saeculum*. Writing against the background of the sack of Rome and the Donatist<sup>27</sup> schism, Augustine emphasised that “the apparent bounds of that [Christian] community do not precisely match those of the heavenly *civitas*” (O’Donnell, 1983).

Bonhöffer (1955) cautioned against thinking in terms of two separate spheres, where one is “divine, supernatural and Christian” and the other is “worldly, profane, natural and un-Christian” (p. 62). Such separation suggests that there is a reality which exists beyond God’s reach, which is a “secular existence which can claim autonomy for itself and can exercise this right of autonomy in its dealings with the spiritual sphere” (p. 63). This is contradictory to the claims of scripture, that “in him all things in heaven and on earth were created” (Colossians 1.15). As a consequence, Bonhöffer affirmed that “there is only one sphere” in which “we stand at once in both the reality of God and the reality of the world” (p. 64). He acknowledged, however, that questions remain about both the status of the visible church, and the reality of evil (p. 67). He answered the question about the church by arguing that it is “the place where testimony and serious thought are given to God’s reconciliation of the world with Himself in Christ”, and that its vocation is to show the world that it (the world) has been redeemed in Christ (p. 68). When it fails to live up to this vocation, it

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<sup>27</sup> The Donatists were a schismatic church in Carthage, who wanted the church to exclude those who fell away from faith at any point.

becomes “a religious society which fights in its own interest and thereby ceases at once to be the Church of God and of the world” (pp. 68-69).

Neither John of Patmos nor Augustine separate their two cities in the *saeculum*: indeed, Augustine’s appeal to the parable of the wheat and the tares specifically rules this out. Asserting that the two cities are completely intermingled, inseparable, prior to the *eschaton*, delivers them from Bonhöffer’s concern that suggesting there are two spheres means that either Christ is not seen as Lord of all, or the reality of evil is ignored. The church is, on the one hand, part of Christ’s reign, but on the other, part of fallen creation.

The “lazy” ecclesiology which fails to acknowledge the reality of actual churches, as compared to theological and doctrinal statements about *the* church (Ward, 2012, p. 4), is a failure to acknowledge the reality of the Fall. “Especially within the churches there is a discounting of how the reality of fallenness (not the reality of evil, but the reality of fallenness: of loss of identity and of alienation, of basic disorientation and of death) affects the whole of creation”: this is not simply about individual human beings, but about institutions and nations (Stringfellow, 1973, p. 19). Stringfellow described the Fall as “*the alienation of the whole of Creation from God*, and, thus, the rupture and profound disorientation of all relationships within the whole of Creation” (p. 76, original italics). This is the situation of the church in the *saeculum*: subject to disorientation and death because of the Fall, but also subject to grace because God is not absent from God’s world, and in Jesus has made good that rupture and disorientation. Jerusalem is present in nations, and churches and institutions, through the work of the Holy Spirit, and “the life of Jerusalem, institutionalized in Christ’s Church (which is never to be uncritically equated with ecclesiastical structures professing the name of the Church)” means that the church “is incessantly being rendered new, spontaneous, transcendent, paradoxical, improvised, radical, ecumenical, free” (Stringfellow, 1973, pp.52-53).

The answer to Ps 137.4 – “How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?” – is thus:

‘See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.’ (Rev 21.3-4, cf. Stringfellow, 1973, pp.156-157)

This is not purely future: the hope expressed in the New Testament is that this is already happening, that although we have no choice but to be part of the *civitas terrena*, we are also part of the *civitas Dei*. In Jeremiah 29.4-9, the prophet told the Babylonian exiles that they should make lives for themselves in Babylon, and “seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare”. As citizens of the *civitas Dei*, we are commanded to pray for the *civitas terrena*, and in seeking its welfare to find our own.

I have included this section on the two cities, Babylon and Jerusalem, *civitas terrena* and *civitas Dei*, because I argue (chapter 11) that failing to understand the vocation of the PSW to engage in work which may be alienating, and will certainly present moral and ethical difficulties, is a failure on the part of the C of E to understand that being part of the *missio Dei* means seeking the welfare of the fallen world.

### ***Sacramental presence***

In the early centuries of the church, there was considerable freedom in how words like *sacramentum* were used, with definition an on-going process as controversy required church leaders to sharpen their understanding. Early in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, Tertullian used *sacramentum* for a solemn pledge of allegiance to God, as it was the word used for the oath of allegiance a new recruit in the army would make to his commander and to the gods (eg. Thompson, 2006, p. 15). Later that century, in the face of external persecution and internal divisions and schisms, Cyprian promoted “a strong doctrine of sacerdotal priesthood” (Oliveira, n. d., p. 5), insisting that “if any one not be with the bishop, that he [*sic*] is not in the Church” (Cyprian, 1886, *Epistle* 68, para 8). Because some had renounced their faith during persecutions, however, the Donatists argued that such bishops had forfeited their right to be bishops, so that any baptisms they performed were not true baptisms, with unhappy consequences for those who believed their sins were forgiven and that their salvation was secure (Oliveira, n. d., pp. 6-7). Against this background, Augustine redefined a sacrament as a symbol of something sacred, a visible form of invisible grace. He also contended that it is Christ who is active in baptism, so the “perversity” or otherwise of the person administering it does not render it void (Augustine, 1887, *Against the Donatists*, VI.1.1).

In the early centuries of the church, many things were considered sacramental, including sermons and prayers (especially The Lord’s Prayer), blessing, signing with the cross, icons, penitential ashing, and anointing (Thompson, 2006, p. 47). Discussing whether all sacred or holy symbols or acts might be considered to be

sacraments, Aquinas argued that “properly speaking a sacrament, as considered by us now, is defined as being the ‘sign of a holy thing so far as it makes men [*sic*] holy’” (*Summa Theologiae*, 1920, III.60.2). However, where Augustine and Aquinas had emphasised the action of God in the sacraments, early reformers, such as Zwingli, in removing what they saw as ‘magical’ interpretations, put more emphasis on the believer’s response to God (MacCulloch, 2009, p. 621). The Reformers reduced the number of sacraments from seven to the two instituted by Christ, baptism and the eucharist, with many insisting that baptism should be dependent on prior belief in the recipient (Kelly, 1998, p. 16).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, focus on Christ’s activity in the sacraments led to renewed emphasis on Aquinas’ “key notion of a sacrament as a symbol that effects the sacred reality it signifies” (Thompson, 2006, p. 61). At least four interpretations of ‘sacrament’ and ‘sacramental’ were claimed, however: specific rites/actions of the church, the cosmos as sacramental (eg. Schmemmann, 1966), the church as sacrament (eg. Paul VI, *Lumen gentium*, 1964), and Christ as the primordial sacrament (eg. Osborne, 1988). There has also been a return to the understanding held before the concept of sacrament was made more rigorous in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, that many things can be sacramental, in that, like sacred space, they mediate an encounter with God.

Calling the universe, and events within it, sacramental is to say that God is both present and active in the world that God has created (Macquarrie, 1997, p. 8). Where Macquarrie was careful not to identify the creation with God, arguing that its power to reveal God to us is evidence of “a sacramental potentiality in virtually everything”, and that anything has the possibility of being sacramental in a situation where it forms a “door to the sacred”, Brown (2004, p. 6) felt that such concern was overplayed, claiming that “so far from the sacramental being seen as essentially ecclesiastical or narrowly Christian, it should instead be viewed as a major, and perhaps even the primary, way of exploring God’s relationship to our world”. The basis for his argument is that of God’s generosity, which is not to be limited. For him, the problem is that there is now “a huge mismatch between the Church and how people at large experience the divine”, not because people do not experience the divine, but because how the church recognises such experience is unnecessarily limited (p. 407)<sup>28</sup>. The

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<sup>28</sup> cf. “Earth’s crammed with heaven,  
 “And every common bush afire with God;  
 “But only he who sees takes off his shoes,  
 “The rest sit round and pluck blackberries.”  
 Elizabeth Barrett Browning, from *Aurora Leigh*, 1856

“eucharist is best viewed as the supreme sacrament not because it offers a complete contrast to the way the world is, but rather because it represents the culmination of how God is perceived to act elsewhere in his [*sic*] world, through material reality” (p. 407).

Tomlin (2014) suggested that there is a priestly line, starting with Adam, running through Abraham and so to Israel, which is then enlarged to include the gentiles in the New Testament, and “with the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, the Church is born, as Jew and Gentile are bound together into a new people, a new community centred around Christ”, which is “a priestly people” (p. 95). Tomlin identified the priestly role as “mediating God’s love to the rest of creation, enabling it to be what it was meant to be, offering it back to God in worship” (p. 95).

There are difficulties with Tomlin’s argument that the church is priest to the world, and the ordained ministry is priest to the church (pp. 113-114), since it begs the question of who is then priest to the ordained ministry, but I find his description of the priestly line and the priestly task helpful in characterising what I mean by sacramental presence. Sacramental presence is about mediating God’s love when it would otherwise not be noticed: as one interviewee put it, “... there were times when I felt I was making God explicit within the situation, without necessarily the other person in the situation having any grasp of what I was thinking or pointing to”. It acts through blessing, absolving and interceding, helping others to be aware at some level, without the necessity to use any religious or technical words, of God’s mercy in their lives.

Sacramental presence makes itself particularly apparent when people experience forgiveness and reconciliation. Fiddes (2000, p. 215) claimed that in pronouncing absolution: ‘You are forgiven, go in peace’, pastors [*sic*] participate “in the rhythm of God’s forgiveness, ... making incarnate in their own flesh and blood the forgiving offer of God”. In so doing “[t]hey are daring to act for God”, because God is aware that people need audible reassurance of their forgiveness, and to know that they are accepted by a “person whom they can grasp with their senses”. Forgiveness needs to be “embodied” to be tangible, and so the person pronouncing absolution is acting directly as God’s spokesperson. A person can thus embody sacramental presence for others, who then experience, whether explicitly or implicitly, the love and forgiveness of God. Such a person enters “alongside another person into the death of meaning and loss of coherence”, in order that they might help in enabling the recasting of the story so that it leads to “healing and peace” (Graham, Walton and Ward, 2005, p. 73), and, in doing so, participating in the *missio Dei*.



## 6.5 In summary

In this chapter, I have provided a theological background for what follows in chapters 7 to 10. My argument in these chapters is that the PSW participates in the *missio Dei* in all that they are and do, both in the church and through their secular work. In this chapter, I have described the development of the concept of the *missio Dei* in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the place of the church within it. I have also discussed factors which I consider to be significant to the identity of the PSW, both in its formation and in its outworking. These include theologies of priesthood, place and work. In the final section, I considered what 'sacramental' means, in order to argue that the PSW embodies sacramental presence, and in so doing, participates in the *missio Dei*. At appropriate points in the chapters that follow, I list the relevant sections and topics from this chapter, rather than breaking up the text with frequent cross-references.



## 7 The PSW: four narratives

In this chapter, I begin to flesh out the conceptual framework described in section 5.3. The four narratives which comprise this chapter form the first IPA level, in which the PSW is described using participants' own words and an empathic hermeneutic (section 4.4). Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), in their discussion of validity of IPA (section 4.5) suggested that one way in which it can be achieved is by quoting verbatim substantial excerpts from the data. Although excerpts are generally shorter in this chapter, with longer sections reserved for the three chapters that follow, I still make substantial use of interviewees' words to ensure that it is their evidence that I am presenting for how they answer the four questions. Excerpts which are particularly rich are used more than once, so that they can contribute to different aspects of the description and interpretation of the PSW.

### Glossary

C of E	Church of England
CIG	Co-operative inquiry group
FTS	Full-time stipendiary (priest)
IPA	Interpretative phenomenological analysis
MSE	Minister in secular employment
NSM	Non-stipendiary minister/ministry
PSW	Priest in secular work
SSM	Self-supporting minister/ministry
<...>	Interviewer in a quotation from an interview
[...]	Editorial interpolation in a quotation from an interview

In this and subsequent chapters, I use quotations from the interviews to illustrate points, and at times to drive an argument forward. Short extracts are inline, longer excerpts, or extracts which I want to emphasise, are set out separately from the main text. At no point is any attribution given: as explained in sections 3.1, 3.4 and 4.4, this is to preserve the anonymity of the participants as far as possible. For that same reason, I do not present any case studies (section 4.4) but use words from the interviews to present four composite pictures of the PSW. Where two separate quotations follow each other, they may come from the same person, but equally they may not.

### 7.1 Narrative 1: what does it mean to be a priest in the secular?

The issue of what it means to be a priest in the secular was raised in the CIG, but as the quotation below from one of the interviews shows, it was also an issue that exercised the interviewees. It is not obvious why one would feel the need to be ordained to continue working in secular employment. Ultimately, however, this is a question about God's call to the PSW, and about the relationship between the PSW and God, with implications for the PSW's relationship with the institutional church. In

addressing this question, I use words from the interviews which contribute to four IPA superordinate themes: 'the PSW vocation', 'why be ordained', 'identity' and 'fulfilment and joy'. The theological background to this section is found in sections 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4: identity and its formation, theology and models of priesthood, the meaning of sacred and secular, and the church in the *saeculum*.

I regard ordination rather like the Book of Common Prayer talks about marriage: it's a concession to our sinful natures. We are a priesthood of all believers, but because of our sinful natures we can't do that ultimately collective thing, and we have to have some who are set apart to do it in a very focused way, and in public. But that implies, I think, that all of us have a priestly ministry, not in private, but without the label. And so the thing that's exercised me for a long time, is, as I said to you earlier, what does it mean to be a priest in the secular?

The question 'why be ordained?' could be construed as a question about why there are priests at all. According to the report *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Lima Declaration, World Council of Churches, 1982, p. 18), the role of the ordained ministry is to "remind the community of the divine initiative, and of the dependence of the Church on Jesus Christ ... [but] the ordained ministry has no existence apart from the community". In section 6.2, I discussed how a dominant theology of priesthood evolved during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, based on the work of Bishop Moberly. Moberly (1969, p. 75) supported the view that the priest was in some way 'set apart', and that ordination conferred an indelible character.

For those churches, and those Christians, who prioritise the priesthood of all believers, there is very little, if any, ministry which needs to be restricted to ordained priests and cannot be undertaken by any Christian, lay or ordained. In the C of E, only those who have been ordained priest may consecrate the bread and wine at the eucharist (Archbishops' Council, 2017b, Canon B12), and speaking for God by pronouncing absolution and blessing using the pronoun 'you' rather than 'we' is reserved to the priest. Beyond these requirements of the church, I see nothing special about the PSW compared with a lay Christian active in the world – both PSWs and lay Christians are part of the *missio Dei* (cf. World Council of Churches, 1982). Given that this research is about the self-understanding of PSWs, however, requires exploring why PSWs are priests, recognising that the very fact of preparing for ordination, and then exercising priestly ministry, necessarily impacts the PSW's understanding of, and construction of, their identity.

'Why are you ordained?' is often interpreted as a question about being and doing, ontology and function. As one interviewee put it:

I ... knew a curate ... who used to say, 'Why do you have to be a priest to do your work?' to which I answered, 'I don't have to be a priest, but I am, and what makes you ask about having to be?'

At another point in his interview, he wondered "why anyone would want to distinguish between ontology and function", assessing this as "nonsense" because "doing and being are two sides of the same coin, though being the more fundamental". The ordination service does not involve magic, but the process which leads up to it, and the sense that something really important is happening at the service, contributed to my participants believing that their priestly ordination was ontological, not simply functional: that because of it, they had a priestly identity that they had not had before. In taking up the functions of a priest, self-understanding and sense of identity are inevitably changed. The question, 'what does it mean to be a priest in the secular?', is thus about identity, more particularly priestly identity and vocation, and about secularity.

My own vocation to be a PSW emerged through my struggle with the demands of parish ministry and secular work, a struggle which ultimately became the means through which I realised that this is the life, with its complexity and tensions, in which I am called to be both a Christian and a priest. Others found it easier to understand the nature of their vocation, although the sense-making was not necessarily so easy: "the thing I loved about MSE was having to make sense of it as a Christian vocation ... in settings that were non-religious, by and large". This interviewee had come to believe that his vocation was to be a Christian in a secular workplace; however, he went into that workplace already an ordained priest, having experienced several years of parish ministry first. For other PSWs, it is a conscious choice or calling right from the start of their ministry: "I already felt called to carry on working ... and for that to be the main focus of my ministry".

All the interviewees made it very clear that their vocation to be a priest was not mainly, or even at all, about service in the church, but is about "being a priest all the time ... I do all this and I am a priest, they're all just inextricably linked together." The secular is brought into the church, and *vice versa*: "you are very much a two-way ... things go both ways". This interviewee saw the political arena as "exactly where Christians should be": her "calling is to stay stuck in ... God in the mess on Sunday, God in the mess on Monday", because "a great deal of what being an MSE is about is ... trying ... to get rid of those boxes", one box labelled 'church' and a separate box labelled 'real life'.

The vocation to be a priest in the secular means that the PSW is publicly identified not only as a Christian, but as a representative of the church: “it’s about being seen as a person who is the church throughout the week, rather than ... just somewhere where you go on a Sunday”. In representing the church, the PSW is “better placed to then enable other people ... to work it out for themselves”, not least because they have had to work out for themselves what it means to be a Christian in the secular. Being a public representative of the church has its difficulties, however, and all the interviewees were clear that part of their calling was to be someone who could and would represent a Christian perspective in their workplace, whether or not this set them at odds with management or their colleagues on occasion.

... it’s about living in the theological interim between Pentecost and the Parousia. We live with the grace of the Holy Spirit, and we live with the persistence of sin ...

... It’s actually about living in that ambiguity that’s at the heart of what living as a Christian is about ...

Given that anyone can exercise a ministry which could be characterised as ‘priestly’ in nature in their workplace, I asked all the interviewees why they had felt they needed to be ordained. All agreed that the fact of ordination did make a difference for them: “I think that being a priest teacher, or teacher priest, whichever way you want to play it, is who I am; and I particularly feel that this is a role that I was born to play”. Another said: “It’s a good question ... I never felt that I had a satisfactory answer ...”, but since retiring from most of her secular work, she felt that she was beginning to get a better grasp of why it had mattered that, when she was ordained, she continued in her secular work. She could not explain it in the form of a logical argument, but instead told me how she had acted in a priestly way with a colleague, who with his wife had decided to abort a baby likely to be born with Down’s Syndrome. She felt that she had helped the colleague to begin the process of forgiving himself because she was able to offer absolution, although not naming it as such (this is discussed further in section 10.3). Any Christian could do this, but a priest, who has had to think deeply about what it means to absolve people in God’s name, is perhaps better placed to do it: “I think what it [ordination] gave me was a confidence that I could speak with authority ... that I had God, the Trinity, behind me and within me, when I was operating”.

All the PSWs I interviewed found that their secular work, workplaces and colleagues, contributed quite as much to their parish ministry, as their involvement in the parish contributed to their secular lives:

... [the] job ... here is so important, that it sustains a huge amount of my energy for doing the parish work. And I think I've got a balance at present, where the two really feed off each other in a positive [way], rather than detract from each other.

Summarising, being a priest in the secular means being “church for them their way”, taking church out of the religious frame and into the secular, and enabling a Christian narrative to have some credibility outside the church. It is not two vocations, one to ministry and one to secular work, but one:

... because I'm one person and I am a priest. Whatever I'm doing it's as a priest, even if it's not obviously priestly and I'm not wearing robes or a collar, I am a priest in whatever I do and I'm mindful of that wherever I am.

... you are not simply a priest in certain places or in particular contexts, you're a priest all the time. ... it's not a priest *and* do all that, it's I do all this *because* I'm a priest. ... It's about the whole of your life is your service to God; the whole of your life is your vocation, whatever you happen to be doing. [original emphases]

## 7.2 Narrative 2: does it make any difference to how we do our jobs?

In teasing out what it means to be a PSW, a key question is whether and how it affects the way we do our secular work, and whether and how it affects our relationships with secular colleagues. In this section, quotations are taken from those labelled with the IPA themes of ‘church/secular interface’ and ‘work matters’.

Relevant sections of chapter 6 include 6.3 and 6.4, and specifically work in the *saeculum*, and the church in the *saeculum*.

... it's who I am, and it comes back to this ontological question: this is what I gave myself to be. ... I was priested, and I can't erase that from my character, if I can put it like that. ... it's ... what are you at the bottom? ... But the fascinating question for me, which I've asked often, is – does it affect the way I do my job here? And I don't know the answer to that ...

During the course of the initial contextual conversation, the interviewees told me about their secular jobs, and how their priestly ordination fitted into the picture, and we discussed the impact of each on the other. While I did not specifically ask the question ‘does it [ordination] make any difference to how we do our jobs?’, I did probe connections they saw between their work in the church, and their work in their secular

workplaces. Some interviewees felt that it was entirely positive, that each fed off the other constructively: “my calling is to be blended between ministry in secular employment ... ministry in the day job ... and ministry in the parish ... are equal and complementary to me”.

For others it was less clear: saying that ordination does make a difference could be construed as disparaging how colleagues do their jobs, while saying that there is no difference would suggest that ordination, or even faith, is meaningless in the workplace:

But does your faith matter to you in the place of work? Well, yes, actually, it really does, it really needs to. So are you better at it than your secular colleagues? No, it would be wrong to say that I was, and that would be an awful thing to say. So I'm strung there between two different perceptions, looking with two eyes: one which I'm saying it's very important, my faith; and the other in which I'm saying it doesn't make me a better employee.

For some interviewees, the main issue was the practical one of keeping two significant areas of work going, while doing both properly:

... although I've got much better at saying, no – I can't do that here, and I need to do that there. ... it's easy to feel a jack of all trades and master of none, that you do two half jobs badly, rather than the one job well.

This echoes a concern that some of the 1970s NSMs expressed in Hodge's report (1983), that it was important to do their secular work properly, and not to allow ministry to detract from that. Being in a secular workplace, allowing the challenges to be part of our priestly formation and ministry, however, is at the heart of being a PSW. The PSW has to:

... do a decent job of whatever it is you're being paid for, and then, okay, the other, if appropriate, will come. But you cannot expect to go in there as the great I am now that I've got this collar, and all the rest of it, and have people treat you in any sort of different way ...

That means sharing in everything, being as involved as everyone else in all that happens, good or not: “one of the things I enjoyed about the [workplace], was working with the tough bits because that way we were working with the real, and, in some sense, that we can't be so precious about our place, that we have always to be pure ... [we have to] be happy to get our hands dirty, or else who will?”



While PSWs who work in manufacturing industry or in the health service may literally get their hands dirty at work, none are immune from issues at work which challenge their faith, and 'getting our hands dirty' then has a personal cost. A teacher talked about the effect on her school of suddenly being classed as 'failing' when the criteria changed: "the stress that that immediately almost overnight brought to everyone at school, was horrendous", leading to

... some really unfortunate patterns of behaviours, which I found very uncomfortable and stressful. Sometimes I was a victim, sometimes I was just a witness. ... I tried during that time to talk about it [to those in the church who should be able to offer support to a priest], but there was just total incomprehension of what it's like to go to the same people, the same place of work day after day after day, when you're being reduced in the national press ...

She talked later about the "corruption" this led to in school, as people resorted to inappropriate ways to improve results, and the way that affected her as a priest. Another interviewee talked about the moral cost in working in a service which was understaffed, relative to the demand: "either we can help nobody ... or we could help some people, but we had to make the judgement". Yet another talked about conducting disciplinary hearings, a part of her current working life that she did not enjoy, while for another it was about working out how to teach business studies given the ubiquity of a profit-driven lens which he felt was contrary to his faith. One interviewee told me about a female PSW he had known who worked as a secretary in a small building firm, whose experience was very different from his in a professional workplace:

... I learnt from her about what I didn't know about, because of the nature of the life of the whole of that firm. And the whole question of what is divine was very different for her and for them ...

An interviewee who worked in manufacturing industry emphasised the importance of putting on his high-visibility jacket and hard hat, experiencing all that his colleagues experienced. I doubt that he would, as I foolishly did in an interview with a recently retired manager, suggest there might be a compassionate way to make people redundant. The PSW to whom I said this firmly rejected it: "there is nothing vaguely ... kind or affirming about being made redundant", but she completely accepted that, as part of her role, it was necessary for her to be involved. Rather than feeling that, as a priest, she should keep clear of such situations, she ensured that she did it in a way which prioritised the welfare of the employee. She later commented that when

she occasionally meets worker priests, who fulfil their priestly vocations through working on the shop floor, she defends her way of being a worker priest because management is also work that needs the impact of priestly presence.

Most PSWs, while perhaps not literally getting their hands dirty, use this as a metaphor to express how our way of being priests is different from that of the FTS: “people who have spent most of their life in full-time parish-based ministry, simply don't have the same experiences ... I mean, all this management stuff and money, and decisions, and risk-taking and so on, and ... that's not what you're about if you're a member of the clergy”. A PSW who had started out as an FTS talked about the “alienation of work” experienced by people in his parish who worked in a government weapons research station. He had wanted one to be a churchwarden, but this person felt he could not be confirmed, and so could not be a churchwarden, because being confirmed would force him to confront moral questions he could not afford to face if he wanted to keep his job (discussed further in section 9.2).

Anecdotes like this contributed to my interpretation of the PSW as necessary to the church's involvement in the world in the *saeculum*, witnessing as it does to the need for Christians to live out their faith in ‘Babylon’. For both these PSWs, the “work questions people were bringing into their engagement with church, [that] we didn't know how to deal with”, ultimately led them out of full-time parish ministry to become PSWs, seeing it as important for the church that some priests grapple with issues like those described here:

... an otherwise admirable bishop, but who also would say ... ‘what can I do for you?’ And yet, I think we all felt it was the wrong way around: what could we do for him? Because, in a way, what an MSE does is to bring ... an experience of work into the life of the clergy.

The alienation of work is an aspect of the *civitas terrena*, of life in Babylon. It is possible to interpret the situation in which the putative church warden found himself as an example of “Bonhöffer's dilemma” that there is no choice but to be tainted by evil, despite being a Christian: “where Christians, in the same frailty and tension as any other human beings, become participants in specific violence they do so confessionally, acknowledging throughout the sin of it” (Stringfellow, 1973, pp. 132-133). The PSWs saw it as important that not only would they seek the welfare of the people they work with (cf. Jeremiah 29.4-9), but that they were implicated in the same ethical issues as their fellow workers, and so could present an authentic Christian response:

... he [PSW's work colleague] said if more priests were like X [the PSW], I might actually consider, because X talks with me, listens to me, respects me, he does a job of work and I can relate to all that he says. If more people were like X in the church, I would actually look again.

The PSWs I spoke to were clear that they were not there to be workplace chaplains, apart from the two for whom it was part of their role description, with time specifically allocated for it. Even these two differentiated between that part of their work and their other responsibilities. A key difference is that, because the PSW is paid to do a secular job, they are subject to the same pressures as everyone else, whereas:

... the chaplain comes in and goes away, and comes in and goes away, and is insulated, in a personal sense, from what the people to whom they are chaplain are experiencing, because they don't experience it themselves.

The PSW stands anxiously with the other employees when redundancy, or pension rights, are discussed, not arriving after the axe has fallen to provide pastoral support for those affected. In a secular workplace, you earn any right you may have to speak of matters of faith by being a fellow worker: taking your job seriously, doing it as well as you can, and taking what comes, good or bad, alongside everyone else.

Does our priesthood make a difference to our secular work? Work matters for the PSW not just because it helps us to identify with, and be accepted by, our colleagues, and not just because it gives us credibility, because we are subject to the same pressures and issues as they are. All the interviewees saw their secular work as an end in itself, and not a means to something else. They all talked about the fulfilment and satisfaction it gave them: "your work is valuable to God". Indeed, four of the six interviewees had discerned their call to ordained ministry as much through their secular work as their church involvement, and felt that they had been called specifically to be PSWs. The other two started out as FTS priests, but fairly early in their careers felt that their call was to be a priest in a secular work setting, rather than in a parish, because they wanted to engage with questions that the workplace poses to faith.

Being good at our jobs, doing them well, is as much a part of the PSW's service to God, our way of participating in the *missio Dei*, as anything we do in church or in the parish. One interviewee told me of an occasion when his line manager complimented him on being his best bureaucrat: "I know ... you didn't accept the call to be a priest in the Church of God to be a bureaucrat, but it doesn't stop you being good at it". A PSW, who had recently retired as a school teacher, commented that: "the world of education hasn't let me go yet, and I'm not letting it go", because she felt she still had

something to offer there. Both were celebrating their ability to do their secular work well, because they felt it was important to God, as did the PSW now working in a portfolio of voluntary occupations, one of which is research in a very niche area, which she saw as “exploring the real meaning of what some people a long while ago did ... partly for the glory of God”. As she said this, I remembered a girl I sat next to in school, many decades ago, who used to write AMDG in the top margin on every page of her exercise books – *Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam*, to the greater glory of God.

For me, this sums up a major feature of the vocation to be a PSW, that our secular work is in many ways the key to our priestly vocation: we do it as well as we can to the glory of God, to help build Christ’s kingdom here on earth, to participate in the *missio Dei*:

... your work is valuable to God, it’s just everything you do. ... because it’s your job, that’s your vocation.

<And you do it well because you – this is what you do and that’s important to God?>

Yes.

### 7.3 Narrative 3: how does this proclaim Christ to the world?

This narrative is about the relationship between the PSW and the wider, secular world. Themes from the IPA on which it is based include ‘church/secular interface’, ‘aware of God in all of life’, and ‘building the kingdom’. It is also based on theological literature discussed in sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3: the *missio Dei*, theology and models of priesthood, sacred space and sacramental presence.

... that’s the acid test for anything we do here, how does this proclaim Christ to the world? ... proclamation isn’t just shouting; proclamation is saying, actually, there’s a whole way of looking at life if you factor in even covertly the God of Jesus Christ. And factor that in and the world looks different, and you may even concede it looks better. Even if you don’t accept the gospel of Christ, you may concede that this is a way of looking at life that answers questions that your world view doesn’t answer.

The PSW who works alongside others may well have far more opportunity to demonstrate a different way of looking at the world than does the FTS who only sees people in the time outside work: “I think it’s a question of being a presence, of bringing the church into the community in a very tangible way.” An important aspect of being a PSW in a secular workplace, therefore, is the opportunities this creates to

form connections and bridges between life in the church and life outside it. The PSW, in common with lay Christians in the workplace, has the duty and the opportunity, as part of their contribution to the *missio Dei*, to ensure that a Christian perspective is heard, which expresses “how religious people think, rather than what people think religious people think”, and which helps people to see the world differently.

The interviewees understood proclaiming Christ as something that happens through relationships, and that it is generally “slow and long and gentle”. For one, it is about enabling others to understand their Monday to Saturday lives as part of the *missio Dei*:

... it’s about ordinary people being able to see and feel that everything that they do is part of vocation, in inverted commas, or building the kingdom, or service to God, or whatever particular terms you want to use for it.

She illustrated what she meant by talking about the “lady who does the coffee rota” who is a hairdresser, listening to her clients’ problems, giving advice, chatting to them, and generally making them feel better about themselves and their lives (this is discussed further in section 9.2). It is part of the role of the PSW to help such a person recognise that what she is doing in her daily work is Christian service, because the PSW has “to work it out for themselves, they are better placed ... to help people work it out for themselves”, especially if the “vicar is not going to acknowledge that as a form of service, as a general rule”. This may be unfair to many FTSs, but it is not uncommon for lay Christians to feel that it is running the church coffee rota which forms their Christian service, rather than understanding their daily work as part of the *missio Dei*. Many Christians limit their understanding of ministry to what happens in church, and so part of the significance of PSWs is that their ministry “is not merely non-stipendiary, it’s secular”. I interpret the failure of both ministers and lay Christians to interpret secular work as a potential contribution to the *missio Dei* as an instance of the misunderstanding that the kingdom of God is somehow more present in the visible church than outside it.

A PSW employed in a multi-ethnic workplace, where there are people of all faiths and none, saw no problem in talking about matters of faith with them all, not to convert others to his way of thinking, “but trying to broaden the horizons and the world view of those around me, but also accepting and listening to them with their faith”. His openness to insights from the faith of others resonates with the interviewee who admitted that there are times when his Christian world view “doesn’t answer the questions that their world view does”. All the interviewees indicated in one way or another that just because we are people of faith, it does not mean we have all the

answers, and that we can learn from our non-religious colleagues and colleagues of other faiths.

Not all PSWs can speak openly about their faith, however. One interviewee talked about times in his secular work when he felt he “was making God explicit within the situation, without necessarily the other person in the situation having any grasp of what I was thinking or pointing to”, which his “line manager might not have liked”. When I pressed him on this – how could he make God explicit if he was the only person who was aware of God in the situation? – he responded that he “could make God explicit by making the love of God ... more explicit to that person, without it being obvious to that person that we’re actually talking about the divine *per se*”. This was also illustrated by another interviewee, describing an act of remembrance which she had led for a work colleague who was killed. It was not a Christian service, but she created “a space where what you would perceive to be the right values, or even the virtues of Christianity can thrive” without being overtly labelled as such:

... it was ... clear from the things that people said during that act of remembrance, that several of them, although it was explicitly not religious, were interpreting it, in effect, as a religious activity for them, for them personally.

In opening up a space for all, whether of faith or not, she too was making God explicit for those who chose to be aware of God’s presence, while observing the constraints of a secular workplace.

Not surprisingly, interviewees referred to some of Jesus’ parables, where the presence of the kingdom is likened to a light on a hill, to salt, and to yeast (Mt 5.13-15, 13.33), but the most common analogy they used was that of a bridge, connecting the world of the church to the world that most people live in most of the time.

I think that MSEs ... are incredibly important in terms of building that bridge, and meeting people where they’re at, which is not ten o’clock on a Sunday morning for an hour. ... they wouldn’t dream of knocking on their parish priest’s door; they probably don’t even know where the parish priest lives, or where the church is ... But they’d be very happy to talk to me about something that’s quite a deep issue of faith, and I think that’s where the real salt and light is, actually, that we’re going out to people and meeting them in their day-to-day life.

Another interviewee claimed that: “the ordinary world is now so evacuated of theological concepts, in any overt sense, ... it needs an act of translation”. The bridge is two-way, however, because not only does the secular world not recognise the language or concepts of the church, the church often fails to see what is

theological outside its own parameters. One interviewee described an encounter between the church and industry in Sheffield in the post-war years:

... radicalising the church by its encounter with the secular ... failed, because the missionaries discovered they believed the Holy Spirit hard at work in the steelworks, but they couldn't find a language that would bridge the gap. If they talked about what they found, the church said, 'What's interesting about that? What's theological about that? If they talked about it in theological language, the steelworkers said bollocks!

He then lamented that such encounters proved to be “a dead end”, and “that’s why I do the job I do, partly”, seeing the constant need to translate not simply between the church and the secular world, but also between the theologians and the “ordinary Christian”, helping them to understand “this is why this matters to your life”. The “constant translation and iteration of theological language and secular language” is “at the core of being a priest”. When I suggested it was about being bilingual, he said it was more like moving from Pidgin to Creole, because Creole is “a more worked out language”, but it can be understood by Pidgin speakers and by people who speak the language from which the Pidgin and Creole are derived, even though all of them may only be fluent in one form of the language.

Another interviewee reflected on how her theological training helped her to interpret what was going on in her secular workplace:

There's no way I talk about redemption, there's no way I talk about absolution, but if you found a problem and a number of people have worked together, and we've sorted it out and things are better afterwards, then you can sit down and work out how that happened and what you did, and how we've improved. And I may go away and think to myself, well, that's a very good example of redemption, absolution ...

Bridging the gap “is [also] about ... bringing secular things into church, or into prayer”:

... when people talk to me, I am praying as they talk, asking God to tell me what to say or whether I need to be quiet. ... I am always in prayer, asking that God guide me in what to say, rather than me just firing off.

Another interviewee, remembering someone he had worked with many years ago, who was a Methodist lay preacher, talked of the sense of compassion and prayer that this person brought into the workplace: “it's something of the presence of God ... a sense that the contemplation of God at some level, produces or substantially upholds that level of compassion”. For him, our calling is “to contemplate the whole of life and

look for God”, recognising that “the secular world ... teaches you some ways of looking for God”. In a wonderful conclusion, he summarised how we make God known in the world:

I have an image of myself about one of the gifts of God, if one is a believer, which is that he requires us to write our lives across the sky. By which I think I mean that why or what we do may be of little worth in some ways, and we shouldn't insist that it's different from that. Nevertheless, it's as though it is of huge worth ...

PSWs are called to write their lives across the sky, not instead of others, but as public Christians, representing the church, to model that proclamation of Christ to the world, and to participate in the *missio Dei*.

## **7.4 Narrative 4: what is the role of the PSW in the life of the church?**

The IPA themes included in this narrative are ‘future of the church’ and ‘parish ministry’, and the theological background is to be found in sections 6.2 and 6.4: theology and models of priesthood and the church in the *saeculum*.

... [being a PSW is] a wonderful role if you're the right person. If you don't mind being outside the city gates, or just standing on the thresholds with your head swivelling both ways in and out. And if you don't mind that the hierarchy of the diocese has all come through stipendiary ministry, usually the large churches, usually theological colleges, and they don't really get where you're at.

In the CIG and in the interviews, relationships between the PSW and the institutional church were a common focus and a significant way in which tensions and negative feelings were expressed. For one interviewee, talking of her retirement from full-time paid employment: “my vicar did think ... that he was going to get a curate ... And I’m afraid I’ve been a bitter disappointment to him from that point of view”. The theological underpinning for understanding one’s priesthood does not suddenly change overnight: once a PSW, always a PSW, perhaps.

There was ambivalence about the concept of parish itself for some:

I love the parishes and I love the fact that every single person living in this country has a parish priest. Now, I wouldn't want to go against that at all, but it may have reflected a medieval way of life, but it doesn't reflect a current way of life.



For at least one of the interviewees, there was no ambivalence – for him, the parish system is irrelevant:

I have always thought outside of the parish boundaries – to me, parish boundaries don't exist. They didn't exist for Christ, they didn't exist for his apostles – and it's outreach to whoever, whenever, however.

Others did not question the existence of the parish system, but did question how the PSW is perceived by the institutional church: “there's little understanding of how we are building the church here, rather than in the parish”. A critique of the institutional church, voiced in different ways by all the interviewees, was that it does not understand that there is a way of participating in the *missio Dei*, which is not about being in church on a Sunday, and that as a result, the PSW is only valued for what they do in church. It can appear that our role is simply to “prop up the parish system on a Sunday morning” without there needing to be “any more money, because there isn't any”.

This feeds into a stereotype of the PSW that they are “amateurs, or they're the hobby priests”. Another interviewee felt that FTSS view him as:

... playing at it a bit ... I got into quite a difficult argument with somebody once about this, about having to – it was almost you work eight days a week, you're lucky; I work 15 days a week for no pay! And it almost got to that, and we both ended up being absurd parodies of ourselves, I'm sure<sup>29</sup>.

One interviewee claimed that:

I think that there's still a huge perception amongst clergy who've gone through – certainly those who've gone through the traditional route of away to college for three years and so on, that we as SSMS are playing at it a bit, and we're not valued, or we didn't ought to be valued as highly as others.

Although it is the PSW's failure to spend all their time in parish-related ministry that incurs such comments, money also comes into it, although as “MSE is not merely non-stipendiary, it's secular”, that is to miss the way in which PSWs contribute to the *missio Dei*. Money may well decide things in the end, however, because as one interviewee observed, we “SSMs will become the default model anyway” since there are not enough people being ordained as FTSS, and the church “couldn't afford to

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<sup>29</sup> He compared this exchange to the Monty Python sketch ‘The 4 Yorkshiremen’, <http://www.montypython.net/scripts/4york.php>, accessed 2 January 2019.

pay". However, for the time being, it remains the case that the "bulk of the Church of England organisationally exists on people who are either stipendiary, or who are working on a voluntary basis a sort of stipendiary pattern".

Overall, there was a general feeling amongst the interviewees that although the institutional church needs its PSWs, it simply does not grasp that our ministry beyond the church is part of the *missio Dei*, and that it has little interest in finding out: "the hierarchy of the church ... [is] ... benevolent at a distance, but not involved, not interested and not really understanding. Hands off!" However, this interviewee later noted that the lack of support does at least give her "the freedom to just get on with it"! It is not that the church does not want to support its PSWs, more that

... none of the support that's offered appears to be the right support ... is it that those trying to respond are so trammelled by the way the church does things, that it can't actually equip people for a very unchurch-y context?

The interviewees all observed that generally their secular colleagues were much more likely to take an interest in their ministry and church work than their parish colleagues were to take an interest in their secular work:

... my secular colleagues have always found it very much easier to – from their point of view – to understand what I'm doing, than my church colleagues, my ordained colleagues.

Another, talking of the support he receives from other staff at his school, said: "it's nice, the recognition of the head, and, indeed, a lot of the staff ... I feel very valued in all that I do by a lot of staff". All the interviewees commented on their perception that the institution of the church sees one normative way of being a priest, but that being a PSW is quite different: "I think it's partly because people who have spent most of their life in full-time parish-based ministry, simply don't have the same experiences", and "there is so much in stipendiary ministry that is both busy and really rather ecclesiastical".

One interviewee, however, remarked:

I think it's difficult to know where – it's really difficult to know where this comes from. I think there's a genuine fear, in some cases, that we may look horribly much more competent at certain things than they are. ... I think there is certainly a residual fear from stipendiaries of SSM clergy, who, in many cases, appear to be having it all. They've got the job, they've got the money, they've got all sorts of things ...

For her, those who refer to priests who are not full-time as “amateurs or ... hobby priests” do so from fear and envy of the ‘other’, who appears to be doing so much better. She was not alone in highlighting the issue of competence: another interviewee commented: “they don’t have the skillset to relate to the world around them”. As one interviewee observed, however: “it’s not quite what they think, is it?”. For both PSWs and FTSs observing the other, the perception may well be but a faint shadow of the reality. Nevertheless, the lack of interest in PSWs’ secular work means that skills and leadership qualities gained in the secular workplace are simply ignored in the church. When I observed that this is a waste, the interviewee I was speaking to responded: “it really is, and an exploitation of our loyalty and commitment, and faithfulness”. For now, the church is

... just hoping that people such as us will keep going what is already there ... if we don’t rock the boat, but, yes, all these professionals out there as MSEs with all those leadership qualities, but not regarded within the church structures as leaders ...

It is perhaps not surprising that the institutional church has difficulty in knowing how to recognise the ministry that the PSW provides outside parish and diocesan structures. Priests require a licence to minister in a parish, or at least ‘permission to officiate’, which works well for those whose ministry is all parish (or diocese) based, but more problematic for those PSWs who see their secular workplaces as the primary locus of their ministry. The result is that “the church is often puzzled ... as to whether they can license people to ministry in the secular workplace”. Illustrating this issue, one of the interviewees talked about someone he had known, who was classed as a ‘work-based non-stipendiary’ by his diocese. He was employed by the Bank of England, and initially licensed as a priest to both a parish and to the Bank (although only the Bank contributed to his salary): “And it worked well, until his line manager changed and would have nothing to do with it. And so it was the wrong model ...”.

## **7.5 Developing the conceptual framework**

It seems clear on the one hand, that the church needs its PSWs, and that the PSWs themselves value both their involvement in parish life and in secular work. However, the church has yet to work out a rationale for this type of priesthood, and, until it does, will have difficulty in truly valuing its PSWs, and making full use of all they bring.

In this chapter, I have used four questions, identified as significant by the CIG, and also posed by interviewees, to frame four narratives which I believe encapsulate PSWs. In the next three chapters, I use three questions from John 1 to put flesh on

the bones of these narratives. In 'who are you?' (chapter 8), I focus on the priestly identity of the PSW, so developing ideas which emerged in the first and fourth narratives above (7.1, 7.4). 'What do you seek?' (chapter 9) provides a way into exploring what it is that PSWs bring to the secular world, and particularly to secular work, moving on from the second and third narratives above (7.2, 7.3). At a recent conference, Sarah Mullaly (Bishop of London since 2018) likened SSMs (and so, by implication, PSWs) to John of Patmos' cave, half way between the busy town and port on the water front, and the monastery at the top of the mountain above it. In 'where are you staying?' (chapter 10), I discuss the PSW's situation both in the church and outside it. This is a way of exploring further characteristics of the PSW discussed in the third and fourth narratives (7.3, 7.4). Together these three chapters provide a justification for my claim that the PSW is part of the *missio Dei*.

## 8 Who are you?

When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him [John the Baptist], ‘Who are you?’ He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, ‘I am not the Messiah.’ And they asked him, ‘What then? Are you Elijah?’ He said, ‘I am not.’ ‘Are you the prophet?’ He answered, ‘No.’ Then they said to him, ‘Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?’. (John 1.19-22a)

In this passage, the priests and Levites, representatives of the established religious authority of the time, questioned John the Baptist about who he claimed to be. A new phenomenon had arisen out in the wilderness,

not under their auspices, and they wanted an explanation. In John’s gospel, the function of John the Baptist is not so much to be the fore-runner who prepares the way (eg. Mark 1.1-8), as to be the first person to identify Jesus as the Messiah (John 1.29-34). This necessitated ensuring that people understood that he himself was not the Messiah, but that his role was that of a witness. All Christians are similarly called to be witnesses, to point to Christ in our midst (eg. Acts 1.8, 1 Peter 3.15, Romans 10.14-15), but the particular vocation of the PSW – the answer to the question ‘who are you?’ – merits further discussion.

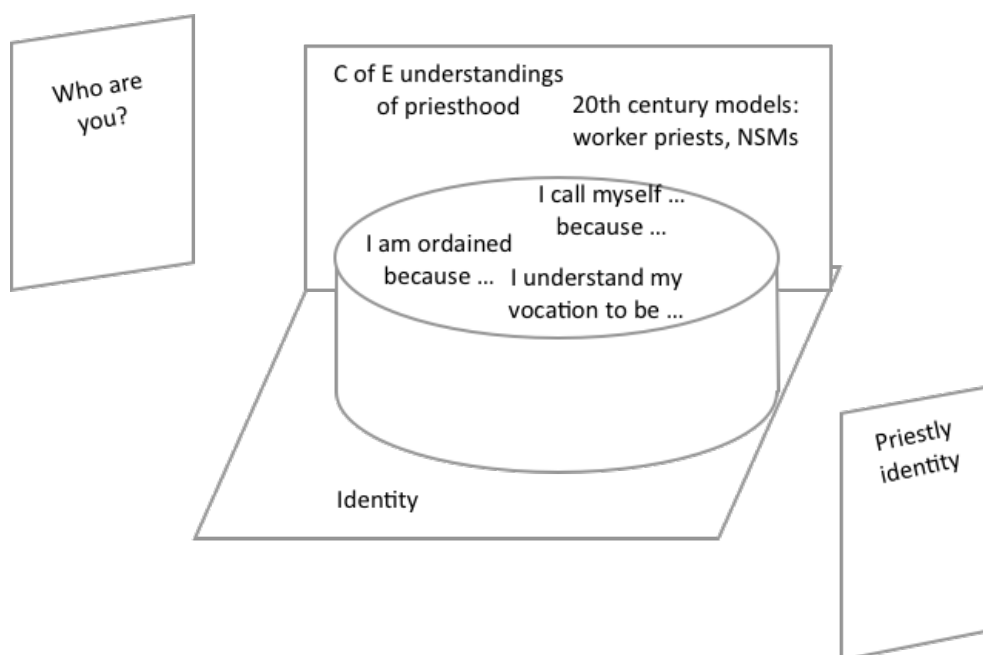
In this chapter, I discuss the ways in which interviewees answered this question. This forms one way in which the conceptual framework, outlined in section 5.3, and introduced in the previous chapter, is developed through the second level of the IPA. The hermeneutic here is questioning, where I situate myself alongside my interviewees, questioning what their self-understanding as PSWs brings to their identity. Figure 8 is a diagrammatic illustration of elements in this discussion, and the way in which they relate to each other. The diagram visualises the elements as artefacts in a gallery, where the first panel a visitor would encounter raises the question: ‘who are you?’, and the final panel, entitled ‘priestly identity’, summarises the discussion. As part of the introductory material, I answer the question for myself as a PSW, situating what follows in my own story, and providing an indication of the

### Glossary

C of E	Church of England
CIG	Co-operative inquiry group
FTS	Full time stipendiary minister
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
M/PSE	Minister/priest in secular employment
NSM	Non-stipendiary minister/ministry
PSE	Priest in secular employment
PSW	Priest in secular work
SSM	Self-supporting minister/ministry
<...>	Interviewer in a quotation from an interviewee
[...]	Editorial interpolation in a quotation

personal context which makes 'who are you?' an important question to pursue here. The main part of the display consists of an interpretation of issues raised by four superordinate themes from the IPA ('identity', 'theology of priesthood', 'why be ordained?', and 'PSW vocation'), and is one way in which the four narratives in chapter 7 can be brought together to form a facet of the vocation of the PSW as one who participates in the *missio Dei*. These are displayed in the ground of ideas about the formation and shaping of identity (section 6.2), and against a background of C of E understandings of priesthood and 20<sup>th</sup> century models for priests who were not FTSs (section 6.2).

**Figure 8: Curating 'who are you?'**



At the end of the first session of the CIG, we agreed to focus on the questions: 'Who am I?' and 'What am I for?'. At the following session, as each participant took it in turn to answer those questions, we explored together our self-understanding as PSWs. In the final CIG session, when we reviewed the transcripts of the follow-up interviews, we commented on the richness of the interviewees' stories, and our sense that we had been privileged to hear previously unheard, even untold, stories. The role of narrative in the construction of identity was discussed in section 6.2, but it is worth noting here that such stories form what Graham, Walton and Ward (2005, p. 18) named 'living human documents': "authentic accounts of lived experience presented in a form that can be read and analysed". Such documents "are always dialogical" because they "witness to ... conversational encounters with other people, other world views and with God", in which "self and identity are ... formed through interaction with others" (p. 20).

## 8.1 As a PSW myself, how do I answer the question: 'who are you?'

At an early stage in this research I encountered the work of Maggie Ross, the pen name of a C of E solitary religious and theologian. Ross was critical of the clericalism which gives “those who wear collars or religious habits ... privileged access to the higher wisdom of God”, asserting that although church leaders “protest such assumptions, their unspoken signals often contradict their words” (Ross, 2007, p. xxvii). She restricted use of cognates of the word ‘priest’ to “the mirroring of God’s kenotic, self-forgetful love, which is irreconcilable, in human terms, with self-reflective, functional power”, using instead ‘presbyter’ “for the middle position of threefold ordained ministry” (p. xxxiii). Priesthood is then not necessarily linked with ordination<sup>30</sup>.

Initially, I found myself in full agreement with what Ross was saying, particularly the argument that priesthood is not about function, but is about “[s]elf-effacement, self-forgetfulness, and humility” (2007, p. 19), and that all Christians are called to be priestly, to commit to a particular way of living (p. 21). I cannot argue with her claim that “[o]rdination *in itself* does not bestow the least spiritual authority, personal holiness, specialized knowledge of ways into God, or privileged access to God” (p. 28, original italics) – indeed to do so would lack due humility. However, as I read on, I began to feel oppressed by her arguments, sensing that something very precious to me was being abused, although it took time for me to work out in detail why I reacted as I did.

I first felt called to ordained ministry, as a Baptist, soon after I first graduated from university in my early twenties. I was accepted to train for ordination at a Baptist theological college, and embarked on my course with great enthusiasm. In my third term, however, I became seriously ill, eventually leaving, initially for a year and then permanently. With my purpose in life gone, all I could think of that I really wanted to do was to have children. Four children and a failed marriage later, I became a teacher. This decision was largely pragmatic – as a teacher, I could get home soon after my children (most days, anyway), and I would not have to find child-care during school holidays. Fortunately, a term of helping with post-16 social studies classes at

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<sup>30</sup> In an interview for the Church Times, Ross commented on “the spiritual suicide of ordination”. *Church Times*, 16 January 2015, <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2015/16-january/features/interviews/interview-maggie-ross-solitary-and-theologian>, accessed 6 September 2018.

my local Further Education college meant that I was not totally naïve about the reality of teaching. Although my first degree was in Natural Sciences (Part I) and Theology (Part II), I decided to train as a maths teacher, being almost at the end of an Open University degree in Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences.

Fifteen years of teaching maths in three secondary schools in England followed. Once I had weathered the first years of teaching, plus a further significant period of illness, I was able to liberate myself from the teachers in my head (who sounded a lot like my old school teachers) and find my own voice. I enjoyed the stimulation of being in the classroom with the students, thinking on my feet as I judged how best to move topics forward, but found that producing resources for my own use and that of others in my department was perhaps the most fulfilling aspect of the job. At the beginning of 2001, I therefore left classroom teaching for a post in a schools' enrichment programme which was part of the outreach of a university maths faculty. This opened up many new opportunities, including cross-curricular and cross-phase projects, working with mathematicians, scientists, astronomers, engineers and others at the university, in presenting new ideas to students and teachers across the UK and the English-speaking world, through the media of videoconferencing and the internet.

I had remained a church-goer through the years since leaving the Baptist college, but had moved away from the Baptist denomination, going first to Quaker meetings, and then finding myself in whichever church was most accommodating of my children. Between 1990 and 2001, we lived in the newish city of Milton Keynes, which had many ecumenical churches, and one of these provided a spiritual home for several years. When we moved to a cathedral city in 2001, my husband (I had remarried by then) started going to the cathedral, having been a cathedral chorister in his youth. In time I started to go with him. Choral Evensong was a delight and at times quite awe-inspiring: I caught glimpses of what it might mean to listen to the music of the heavens both through the music and the beauty of the liturgy, and also through silence.

Around Easter 2005, I found myself in the cathedral talking to one of the residential canons, saying that I thought I had a call from God to ordained ministry. As my mouth opened and the words stumbled out, the rest of my mind was screaming 'Stop! Shut up! Dig a deep hole, get in it, and bury yourself – right now!' But my mouth would not shut up, and in due course I found myself going through a lengthy and at times quite difficult and intrusive selection procedure. As I drove myself to the 48-hour conference which would determine whether or not I would be recommended for training for ordination, I heard a song playing on my car CD player: 'I'm going to meet



my Lord'. I felt excited, out of control, and frankly terrified, as I wondered what on earth I was doing<sup>31</sup>.

In August 2007 I commenced training, and I was ordained as a deacon in the C of E in late June 2009. On the morning of my deaconing (a Saturday), I was awake very early, walking in a misty June dawn in the garden of the retreat house where we ordinands were staying. All through that day, I felt disoriented, dislocated even. On the Monday morning, I returned to my secular job – and felt disoriented all over again. During training I had experienced similar disorientation going from work on a Friday evening to residential weekends, then returning on Sunday afternoons to domesticity and work on Monday. It took time for the transitions to feel familiar, and to know how best to navigate them.

A year later, I was ordained priest. In the summer of 2005, knowing that I had set myself on a path which might end in ordination, I attended an ordination service in the cathedral for the first time. I was totally overwhelmed by what I heard and saw. One by one, the ordinands knelt in front of the bishop, who laid his hands on their heads. Immediately around them were a small group of other robed people placing a hand on the ordinands' shoulders and arms, and around them a host of other robed people all connecting to the ordinand as they put a hand on the shoulder, arm or back of the person in front of them. I could only imagine what it might feel like to be the person at the heart of this; I understood that something very powerful was happening.

When the time came for my own ordination as a priest, I slept well and there was no early morning walk in the garden, for I knew much better what to expect this time. Kneeling in front of the bishop, as he laid hands on me, saying: 'Send down the Holy Spirit on your servant, Jenny, for the office and work of a priest in your Church', I felt calm and at peace, at the centre of the prayers and support of a whole host of fellow priests. It was the following morning when I awoke early, nervous and excited, knowing that in a few hours I would celebrate the eucharist for the first time. The church was absolutely full, people from the five churches in the group that I served, my family and friends. Part way through the eucharistic prayer, my colleague, who was acting as deacon, turned over two pages in my order of service at once. There was no part of my brain disengaged enough to notice, so I just continued for a short while, causing confusion to my husband, who was the organist for the service, and

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<sup>31</sup> Listening to that same song some time later, I realised that these were not the words at all!

was waiting to play the music for the *Agnus Dei*<sup>32</sup>. It did not matter, we got back on track: and I realised that I was in the midst of something much greater than myself or my mistakes.

Since that day, I have presided at the eucharist many times. It is never routine, never a matter of going through the motions; always I am aware of leading the congregation in the presence of the living God, always I take a moment in the vestry to commit myself again to God as a priest in God's church. I am conscious as I robe and put on my stole that I am putting on God, inhabiting a space where God is present. Being ordained gave me the church's authority and the confidence to put myself in that place.

This is not trivial, it goes to the very heart of my identity and my vocation: and that is why Ross' dismissal of ordained priestly ministry was so offensive to me, and is one reason why I am doing this research. Preparing in the vestry, standing behind the altar, priestly identity is clear; sitting at a desk, standing in front of a room full of students or teachers, what is it then?

## 8.2 Interviewees' perspectives on their identity as PSWs

As I read through excerpts from the interviews, tagged in the IPA with the superordinate themes 'identity', 'theology of priesthood', 'why be ordained', and 'PSE vocation', I decided that one way to draw them into a coherent whole was to focus on three aspects of PSWs' self-understanding. I have represented them in Figure 8 in three incomplete statements:

I am ordained because ...

I call myself ... because ...

I understand my vocation to be ...

In Figure 8, these statements are rooted in the ground of identity, as discussed in section 6.2, and set against a background of C of E understandings of priesthood and 20<sup>th</sup> century models of worker priests and NSMs (section 6.2).

### ***I am ordained because ...***

The six interviewees came from different church backgrounds. On the basis of what they said to me in our contextual discussions and in their interviews, I would say that

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<sup>32</sup> He had composed a setting of the *Common Worship* text of the eucharist for the occasion – a most amazing ordination gift!

three of them were from an evangelical background, and three were from a liberal catholic background. One way of describing the difference between these is the question as to whether ordination has any ontological effect, or is purely functional. As Tomlin (2014, p. ix) summarised in his account of giving a talk to a group of ordinands, who “included the whole spectrum, from evangelicals to charismatics to catholics”, it would be possible to have “a very strong idea of the identity of the priest”, or equally to be “convinced of the priesthood of all believers”. Ordinands and priests with a strong sense of their priestly identity may well claim that ordination confers ontological change, and will tend to come from a liberal catholic tradition or even the Anglo-Catholic tradition, while those for whom the priesthood of all believers is more important may feel that their ordination is about function, rather than ontology, and will generally be from an evangelical or charismatic tradition<sup>33</sup>.

Such nuance is not apparent in the interview material, however. I asked all of the interviewees why they had chosen to be ordained, in several instances prefacing my question with an account of a conversation in which I participated in my role as a diocesan officer for SSMs. I had been asked by a vocations adviser what my opinion was about recommending a potential candidate, given that this person intended to continue in their secular job after ordination, and that they could perfectly well continue any workplace ministry they might have without needing to be ordained. An interviewee, who had been ordained in precisely this circumstance, said that

... the ultimate answer is, God decided that he [*sic*] wanted me to be ordained, and he appears to have decided that he wanted me to be ordained in the context in which I was then working, and largely still function. And, well, if that's what he wanted, then ultimately that's what he got.

She was not the only one to attribute the decision to go forward for ordination to a belief that this is what God wanted. Another told me that “I still feel that God was calling me for priesting from 1999”, having earlier said that he saw his priesting as “a gift from God”. On the other hand, one interviewee said that his response to someone who asked why he needed to be a priest to do his work, was “I don't have to be a priest, but I am, and what makes you ask about having to be?”. This particular person, from a liberal catholic background, felt that distinctions between being and doing, ontology and function, were misplaced, and that in reality they are simply “two

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<sup>33</sup> Despite my earlier Baptist and Quaker years, I have ended up in ministry in liberal catholic churches.

sides of the same coin”, although he finished by saying that “being [is] the more fundamental”.

The other five interviewees, whether from an evangelical or liberal catholic background, felt that their ordination involved ontological change:

I’m ordained because that’s what I felt called to be. It is ontological for me ...

When I was priested, I felt an extraordinary shock, as Bishop X laid his hands on me ... And for me, that – yes, that’s the symbol of that ontological change occurring. ... And I, from that day, really, thought I was a different person, and as I said, five years ago before I started, six years, before I started training, I’d have said, no, I wouldn’t have seen that ... I think, in that sense, it’s right up there with that permanent change that is completely irreversible.

Church background made no difference to the kinds of things interviewees said about their ordination, and neither did length of time since ordination. One thing that did vary, however, was what they said about themselves and their role *vis-à-vis* Jesus. One said: “there’s some ontological differences between us and Jesus, actually”. He was commenting on wrist bands saying ‘WWJD’: ‘what would Jesus do?’, and that he wanted one which said: ‘since when were you the Son of God?’. Another interviewee, however, said: “I think that we have the responsibility of acting in the way that Jesus would act, representing him here in physical form, in whatever we do”.

In one interview, this exchange occurred:

<So are you saying that the priest is standing in place of Christ as mediator?>  
I certainly wouldn’t want to, that would seem to be unduly presumptuous. But I think that we do finally stand with Christ, and not in the place of Christ, in his and our facing of the world. Does that make sense?

In section 6.2, I discussed the unease I felt at christological interpretations of priesthood, deriving from Moberly’s (1969) defence of Anglican orders against state erastianism and Roman Catholic repudiation of them. I further described the sense of relief I experienced when I encountered a trinitarian basis for priestly ministry, based on the work of Fiddes (2000) and Pickard (2009), and so I particularly appreciated the way in which this interviewee expressed himself. However, what another interviewee said also resonates with my own feelings and experience:

... when I could preside as a priest, and feel the Holy Spirit move through, that was the fulfilment of – and, as I say, so humbling that God had chosen me. ...

It's a gift from God to be in that place, to preside at the eucharist, and to have the Holy Spirit go through ...

The phrasing might be a little awkward, but his sense that this is not simply about him, but about the work of the Holy Spirit, is a reminder that in the end, there is no separating out Christ from the work of the Holy Spirit in and through us, and that God is not one, nor three, but is Trinity.

Moberly's argument rested in part on his christological understanding of what happens in the eucharist, but he also discussed at length what the effect of ordination is on a priest, claiming that the "character" which is conferred, and is indelible, is a status, inherently involving capacities, duties, responsibility of ministerial life, yet separable from and, in a sense, external to the secret character of the personal self" (Moberly, 1969, p. 92).

At least one of the interviewees (quoted above) appeared to agree with Moberly, that there is an indelible conferring of character at ordination, which can be distinguished from the development of character which is inherent in going through a formative process, such as training for ordination; whether others would have, had I asked them, I cannot now determine. However, one expressed it thus:

Because it's who I am, and it comes back to this ontological question: this is what I gave myself to be. In 1979 I said – or '80 I was priested – and I can't erase that from my character, if I can put it like that ...

I understand this to say something about the effect on character of priestly formation, rather than the conferring of an external character, but I may be wrong. Other interviewees talked of being set aside in some way through ordination:

I always felt a little apart ...

I mean, some people do need to be ordained, there is a setting apart even if you're in the middle of the mess, that somehow or other gets recognised.

... one cannot escape that sense of call set aside-ness ...

This suggests quite a 'high' view of priesthood, which Moberly would surely have recognised. He did not see priests as "intermediaries between the Body and its life. They do not confer life on the Body, in whole or in part", but he did believe that priests are "specifically representative for specific purposes and processes of the power of the life, which is the life of the whole body, not the life of some of its organs" (1969, p. 68). Given that he went on to say that the body needs all its organs and that the

functionality of one organ cannot be given to a different organ, I interpret Moberly's argument to mean that while the origin of the life of the body of Christ depends on Christ, not on an ordained priesthood, nevertheless the priesthood has a necessary role in enabling that life. The source of the authority of the ordained priesthood is thus from God, and not from the church. This view was confirmed by other interviewees:

I think what it [ordination] gave me was a confidence that I could speak with authority, and I don't mean the authority of a teacher, but that I had God, the Trinity, behind me and within me, when I was operating.

Others saw it as recognition by the church, or as something needed for the community:

... ordination is conferring something about the mind of the church ...

I am a priest, but I'm a priest only really by virtue of being part of a college of clergy, because we are trying to be priests for the community ...

For all the interviewees, their ordination was highly significant, contributing to their sense of identity. Indeed for some, there was a sense that this was something they had needed in order to become fully themselves:

I think when I was ordained a priest it was like, hah, now I am fully it.

... being an ordained priest made a huge difference in all sorts of ways.

As discussed in section 6.2, literature on the formation of identity is not of one view on whether identity is discovered, and hence already present in nascent form, or constructed; from remarks like these I cannot form an opinion on what my interviewees would have made of such arguments. Perhaps there is insight to be gained, however, from their perspective on whether they felt their calling was initiated by God – suggesting that there is a priestly version of them that God wanted brought into being – or whether they see it as their own choice under God – suggesting that it is an identity which they are free, under God, to construct. This was an issue which was discussed in the CIG, without our coming to any conclusions about it.

Certainly, some of the interviewees understood their vocation to be initiated by God, and that their choice was whether to obey or not. Personally, I am aware that my ordination as a priest has fundamentally changed me from the person I was before, while being in continuation with my unordained self (as was the case with being married, having children, and becoming a teacher). In the end, I wonder if this is not

similar to the discussion about being and doing, and that they are two sides of the same coin: in the doing is the becoming, and in choosing to do what I believe God is asking me to do, I become a person who chose to follow a path which resulted in ordination as a priest (cf. Appiah, 2005, p. 20: our identity is fashioned through our interaction with others).

### ***I call myself ... because ...***

What's in a name? As discussed in section 6.2, the labels and names we are given or which we apply to ourselves, contribute to forming our identity. This is encapsulated in the difficulty I have had in deciding which acronym to use at which point in this thesis. There are two key points: are we ministers (M) or priests (P), and is what we engage in secular employment (SE) or secular work (SW)? In this section, I justify my use of *PSW*, rather than *MSW* or *M/PSW*; in chapter 9, I focus on why I feel *SW* is more appropriate than *SE*.

According to the C of E's website:

Ministers in secular employment are deacons or priests whose ministry is focused in the workplace. Such ministers may be employed outside church life as nurses, engineers, teachers and in many other jobs.

Ministers in secular employment tell the story of God's love in their workplaces, helping people make connections between life and faith through prayer, worship and reading the bible. They will also preach, teach and enable God's people to be better disciples of Christ. (Archbishops' Council, n. d.)

This strikes me as inadequate in a number of ways, not least because of the limitation to ordained ministers, since I can see no good reason not to include licensed lay ministers. How we perceive ourselves – whether as priest or minister – came up in the first CIG session. In general we thought of ourselves as priests, but there was some support for minister and also for deacon<sup>34</sup>, since in the Ordinal deacons are described as those who are called to reach “into the forgotten corners of the world, that the love of God may be made visible” (Archbishops' Council, 2007a, p. 15), which forms a good description of the vocation of the *PSW* (cf. chapter 10).

As can be seen from the quotations in the preceding section, the six interviewees in my research all saw their priestly ordination as a significant contributor to their

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<sup>34</sup> In the C of E, priests are ordained as deacons first, and the subsequent ordination to the priesthood in no way negates the first ordination, so we are all deacons as well as priests.

identity. Talking about people who are ordained later in life, one interviewee observed:

I guess it's in terms of your ontological understanding: am I first and foremost a priest, even though I might have been, in terms of time, a worker before that? And my secular job might continue with apparent interruption, but I have changed, and so I'm now first and foremost a priest.

This is also exemplified in this exchange from one of the follow-up interviews:

<Is there anything that you think perhaps you should have emphasised more, or emphasised less [in the first interview]?>

... the statement that really stood out ... was – I am a priest. And I remember our conversation about what difference is it to be a Christian in the workplace, and to be a priest ...

< And thinking about it now, that statement 'I am a priest', why does that stick out for you?>

Because in the workplace, you are – I was a teacher – and all the other responsibilities that I had, and labels<sup>35</sup> – and priest. And that, for me, couldn't be forgotten because it was who I am. I always felt a little set apart ...

<You may or may not have noticed in the blurb I put in my online questionnaire, that I used the acronym M stroke PSE, because when I was first talking to people about this, I was just using minister in secular employment, as everybody else does. And then when I thought quite deeply about myself, I thought, it's really important to me that I'm a priest, not just a minister. And I just wonder whether you sort of saying 'I am a priest' stuck out for you, or whether that's just me, or whether that's perhaps something that you might feel also?>

I didn't notice it during our conversation, but now you've raised it, I don't call myself a minister generally. I call myself a priest, which was a deliberate and conscious choice years ago, because my church is more – or it used to be – a lot more evangelical than probably it is now, and certainly than I am now. So the word 'priest', it felt almost like a half-brave step to use it, but it has, for me, certain connotations that are important.

<Such as?>

Of being a part and called, and ordained for a purpose.

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<sup>35</sup> For instance, Head of Department.



As I explained in this conversation, I had stopped using MSE, and started to use M/PSE, because of the discussion in the CIG, and so M/PSE is the term used in the online questionnaire, and in all the documentation associated with the interviews. During the analysis of the interview transcripts, however, I became persuaded that although the interviewees generally used the accepted term, MSE, for themselves, what they were actually telling me was that they understood their priestly designation to be significant, and not one that could simply be subsumed under ‘minister’. For much of the period while I was working with the data, and drafting this thesis, I therefore used the term PSE. At a late stage, I decided that this also was not quite right: this is discussed further in chapter 9.

From his self-identified perspective as a gay African-American, Appiah (2005, pp. 21-22) argued that there are cultural scripts which tell us how to be “male or female, black or white, gay or straight” (section 6.2). The interview excerpt above confirms my own feeling that the script that the C of E has for MSEs, is deficient, not only because of the point already made about ‘minister’ not being used in a sufficiently inclusive way, but also because it fails to acknowledge that there is a question to ask about the significance of priesthood for the MSE. If Appiah is correct, that adopting “an identity, [making] it mine is to see it as structuring my way through life” (p. 24), then the question of what we are called is not trivial, and so the views of those of us whose lives follow the pattern of the PSW need to be considered, since a name or label, once given, has power, shaping what we think appropriate for that sort of person (p. 66).

The C of E website sees the role of the MSE as one of “helping people make connections between life and faith through prayer, worship and reading the bible”. This is not how the 1950s and 1960s worker priests interpreted their role, nor the 1970s NSMs. For the worker priests (section 6.2), it was about working alongside people who were unlikely to connect with the church in other ways, and was interpreted as a ministry of presence and accompaniment, rather than the model of discipleship advocated by the C of E (cf. Mantle, 2000). The 1970s NSMs found that trying to organise workplace Bible studies or prayer groups was not successful in the main<sup>36</sup>, and that much of their workplace ministry with non-church-goers either took

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<sup>36</sup> My own attempt, post-ordination, to run three lunchtime sessions on the relationship between faith and work was similarly unsuccessful: one person came late to the middle session, otherwise I was on my own apart from the presence at the first session of the university chaplain to staff.

the form of pastoral support, or engagement in challenging discussions about topics such as the death of a child, or a devastating earthquake (Hodge, 1983, p. 53).

Hodge felt that the “training for ministry at work provided by some courses” was insufficient, and that “all the courses reported that they make no distinction in the training offered to those planning a non-stipendiary or a stipendiary ministry” (1983, pp. 42-43). One of the complaints recorded in Hodge’s Report is that of a director of post-ordination training, who felt that because “staff of the training courses have not worked themselves”, and “do not know what they are talking about”, that it was inevitable that such training would be inadequate (p. 43). This is still essentially the case, in part for the same reasons, but also, in attempting to avoid complaints by SSMs that their ministry is not taken as seriously as that of FTSs, there is a tendency now to claim that all priests are the same, and so all need the same training (cf. Morgan, 2011). This unhelpfully confuses equality of status with equality of provision of experience. As has been discussed (section 6.2), three different models, other than that of the FTS, emerged after the Second World War: the worker priest, who is a priest first but chooses menial, low-paid work as a form of incarnational ministry; the industrial chaplain, who may or may not be ordained, but is employed as a chaplain, not as a secular worker; and the NSM whose secular work preceded ordination, and who continues that work post-ordination.

Four of the interviewees were in the last category, in that ordination came later than establishing their secular careers, which continued without regard to their ordination. Although therefore not in the typical worker priest model, all four felt strongly that an incarnational ministry of presence was important to them also. The other two interviewees do not fit any of these models particularly well, as they were both ordained soon after university and initially served as full-time parish priests for a number of years, but then found that their vocation was to work in a professional secular capacity, while remaining priests licensed to a parish. Both of these talked about their lack of fit with acknowledged models.

One of the interviewees strongly identified with the worker priest model:

<So would you see yourself in the line of the worker priests?>

Yes. ... they still exist, I mean, there are still younger ones coming through.

... One or two of the original French ones are still alive, and until a few years ago more of them were still alive. ... we still have close contact. The

discussion is always the difference between the more European model, where they went into the lowest possible forms of employment, or even unemployment.

<... it was a point of honour that they were not to be promoted into the managerial classes at all.>

Yes. Most of us in the UK are actually middle-class, we're – not all, there are some who aren't – but we are teachers and things of that sort. And I find the Europeans incredibly challenging, because they always force me to look back at who I am and what I'm doing.

She went on, however, to describe how being a manager, and so considered “part of the enemy” by the European worker priests, gave her opportunities to make a difference in her workplace in ways which would not be accessible to the working-class model of worker priest.

### ***I understand my vocation to be ...***

The interviewees understood God's call on their lives as a call to be ordained as priests, while continuing to work in their secular occupations. One described going to a meeting with the bishop who she hoped would sponsor her as an ordinand, feeling nervous

... because by that stage I already felt called to carry on working in school, and for that to be the main focus of my ministry, unofficially, I wasn't going as a school chaplain or anything ...

And it all fell into place as if God were at work, because Bishop X obviously didn't have a problem with me being ordained at all; and in fact, said he'd given my situation consideration, and he felt that I ought to carry on working in teaching full-time and that ought to be the focus of my ministry. And that I had things to bring to state education, particularly in a town like ...

The detail of each interviewee's vocation is specific to them, but they all shared a sense that they were called by God to be that person, and that that they have one vocation, not several:

Starting from the point that you are a priest all the time, you are not simply a priest in certain places or in particular contexts, you're a priest all the time. That does quite a lot in terms of integration, but the other side of it comes from the people who ask you, 'Well, how do you manage to be a priest and do all that?', to which the answer is, 'it's not *and*, it's not be a priest *and* do all that. It's – I do all this *because* I am a priest. I do all this and I am a priest, they're all just inextricably linked together.' It's not just turning up to church on Sunday and putting some funny robes on, and saying some rather weird and ancient words. And I don't – a lot of the time, I don't do what you might look at, I mean, I don't,

have never, run prayer groups at work, or done anything like that. It's about the whole of your life is your service to God; the whole of your life is your vocation, whatever you happen to be doing. [original emphases]

Because I'm one person and I am a priest, what I'm doing, it's as a priest. Even if it's not obviously priestly and I'm not wearing robes or a collar, I am a priest in whatever I do, and I'm mindful of that wherever I am.

As these excerpts indicate, there is no split in identity; there is no one single lens through which any of the interviewees understood their vocation, other than that wherever they are, whatever they are doing, it is as a priest.

### 8.3 Conclusion: Priestly identity

The focus of this chapter is the question the priests and Levites, sent out from Jerusalem to see what was going on in the wilderness, put to John the Baptist: 'who are you?'. In reflecting on that question for myself, I recognise four key influences which have brought me to where I am now: my family, being a teacher, being ordained priest, and God, and it was essentially the same for the six interviewees, with the appropriate professional identity substituted. We have chosen lives in which these things are important (cf. Appiah, 2005, p. 10).

One way in which we construct our identities is through difference (cf. Appiah, 2005, p. 64). It was quite common for interviewees to clarify what they felt they were not, as a way of saying something about who they were. One interviewee emphasised that she has never been the sort of SSM whose secular work is only important in so far as it supports them financially: her work mattered to her for itself, and her ministry is a gift for which she has never been, nor wished to be, paid. This was also important to another interviewee, who likened himself to St Paul, working to provide for himself. Another contrasted his commitment with that of an FTS he knew, who would refuse to take funerals on his day off. We are not chaplains, paid to minister; we are not SSMs, who are indistinguishable from FTSs, other than in not being paid; we are not worker priests, committing ourselves to a ministry of presence with low-paid workers; and we are not MSEs on the model described on the C of E website, providing discipleship in our workplaces.

Our calling, the PSW vocation, is not in the end about the church, but about all of life: it is about participating in the *missio Dei*, rather than seeking to perpetuate an institution, although we remain committed to the institutional church. One interviewee summed it up as "the sacrament of offering up daily life for myself and others in the

eucharist – not always at an altar – but in, so to speak, eucharistic moments when the everyday, the quotidian, becomes sacred”.

We are priests whose secular work is part of their vocation, who seek to serve God in all aspects of our lives, and that is the focus of the next chapter.



## 9 What do you seek?

The next day John [the Baptist] again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, 'Look, here is the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, 'What are you looking for?' ... One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated Anointed). (John 1.35-38a, 40-42)

### Glossary

C of E	Church of England
CIG	Co-operative inquiry group
FTS	Full time stipendiary minister
IPA	Interpretative phenomenological analysis
MSE	Minister in secular employment
PSW	Priest in secular work
<...>	Interviewer in a quotation from an interviewee
[...]	Editorial interpolation in a quotation

In the gospel tradition, John the Baptist's role is to point to Jesus (John 1.20, cf. Matthew 3.11). According to John the Evangelist, on hearing what John the Baptist said about Jesus, two of his disciples, one of whom was Andrew, were sufficiently convinced to follow Jesus. Realising they were there, Jesus asked them what they were looking for, or as the King James Bible renders it: "What seek ye?". Andrew recognised that they had found the Messiah, and immediately went to find his brother, Simon: for it was the Messiah that they were seeking.

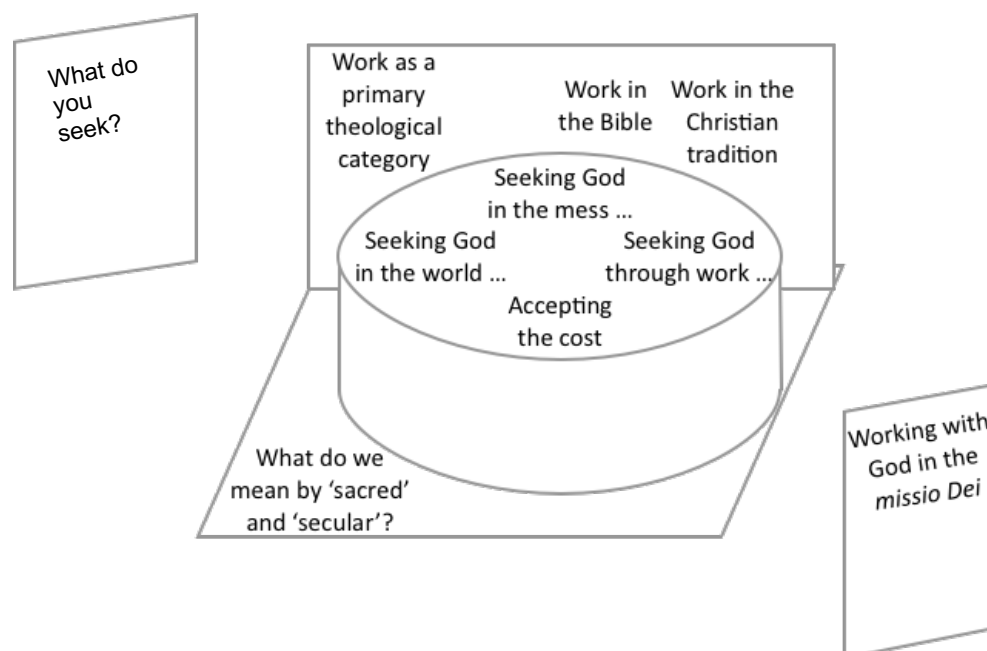
In the first paragraph of his *Confessions*, Augustine wrote: "*cor nostrum inquietum est donec requiescat in Te*", which my English translation renders as "our hearts find no peace until they rest in you" (Augustine, 1961, p. 21). In *Befriending our Desires*, Sheldrake (2016, p. xi) claimed that "[d]esire lies at the heart of what it is to be human". The quotation from Augustine is one that has resonated for me ever since I first read it many years ago, and reading Sheldrake's work confirmed my sense that there is something important here: that the desire for the ultimate (God), and the restlessness we experience in the absence of knowing God, underlie so much of our motivation for what we do and what we seek. In my conversations with the CIG members and in the interviews, I was left in no doubt that the ground of all the being, doing and seeking that we discussed was our sense that it is about God, and our seeking of God through our calling to be PSWs: like Andrew and his companion, we too seek the Messiah.

This chapter continues the development of the conceptual framework, and is, like the previous chapter, part of the second level of the IPA, in which a questioning hermeneutic is used to understand another essential facet of the PSW. From reading

through excerpts from the interview transcripts which I had tagged with the superordinate themes ‘work matters’, ‘building the kingdom’ and ‘aware of God in all of life’, I have constructed a narrative for the way in which the PSW seeks the Messiah.

The way that I have conceptualised this narrative is illustrated diagrammatically in Figure 9. It starts from the question, represented on an opening panel, ‘what do you seek?’. The background to this narrative is work as a primary theological category, and in particular through its treatment in scripture and in the Christian tradition (section 6.3). The narrative is grounded in a discussion of what we mean by the categories of ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’ (section 6.3). The substance of the narrative is the way in which we PSWs seek God, and the content of that narrative contributes to an analysis of how we feel we contribute to the building of God’s kingdom on earth, or to phrase it differently, how we work with God in the *missio Dei* (sections 6.1, 6.4). Like the discussion in the previous chapter, this presents another way of interlinking the four key relationships of the PSW (with God, with their secular work, with the world, and with the church).

**Figure 9: Curating 'what do you seek?'**



Sheldrake (2016, p. xi) wrote: “There is an energy within all of us that haunts us and can either lead us to set out on a quest for something more or can frustrate us by making us nostalgic for what we do not have.” In the next section, I explore my own sense of seeking, situating my choice of the question ‘what do you seek?’ in my own



experience, which provides a basis for the interpretation of the PSW that follows in the rest of this chapter

### **9.1 As a PSW, how do I answer the question: ‘what do you seek?’**

My maternal grandparents, born in 1898 and 1899 respectively, married in their early twenties and moved away from their families in rural Norfolk, not, as far as I remember from my mother’s stories, to be with anyone they already knew or to take up some specific form of employment, but simply to better themselves. Settling into what was then a rural Buckinghamshire village, they raised their family of five children, including my mother who was born there. My father’s family arrived there a few years later, when he was 10, and so I grew up in a small community where everyone knew my family, and everyone knew me.

I left the village of my childhood twice. My first leaving was at the age of 18 for university. Although to start with I returned during the vacations, I married a fellow under-graduate at the end of our second year and we set up home (in successively more squalid, but cheaper, flats) in our university city. After graduation, we initially stayed put, moving on two years later so that I could attend a Baptist theological college. During that time, at a reunion with friends from undergraduate days, one commented how much she thought I had changed, that I was much more restful to be around. I did indeed experience a sense of ‘finding myself’ when I started at the Baptist college, but, sadly, it did not last.

I returned to the village of my childhood, where my parents and maternal grandfather still lived, about nine years after leaving the first time, with two small children and a husband who frequently worked away from home. I wanted something of that security I had known as a child for my own children, the security of being known, being rooted – not to mention having a devoted granny on hand! However perhaps it was more the devoted granny than anything else that kept me there for the next six years, during which I had two more children. Village life began to feel claustrophobic – my parents were pillars of the local Baptist Church and the Memorial Hall, and we would follow in their footsteps, of course. Perhaps it was the weight of expectations which, when opportunity offered, made me so keen to accompany my husband to the USA, initially for a period of three months, and ultimately for almost six months.

We would have stayed longer, perhaps permanently even, but for my mother, who found the absence of her grandchildren unbearable. Instead, some two years after our return to the UK, we moved to an isolated farmhouse in the Peak District –

beautiful in summer, a nightmare in winter. When we first saw our farmhouse, it was spring; on the evening of the summer's day we moved in, I looked away towards the horizon and saw layer after layer of dark peaks, merging into the darkening sky. I was beguiled by the sense of being on the edge, reaching out restlessly to what I did not know. But we had no roots there; we were not known, we were incomers to be idly talked about, then forgotten. Away from everyone who really knew us, our lives fell apart. Winter brought snow and isolation, and an increasingly fragile marriage could not take the strain.

Needing to find a way forward for myself and my children, I decided the answer was teaching, so applied to do a course of study leading to the Post-Graduate Certificate in Education. As an initial assignment, I was asked to write an account of what had brought me to that point. That account no longer exists (there were no computers in those days, with everything saved on an external hard drive), but I remember ending it, saying something like: "So that is how I come to be where I am now, hoping that finally I have found my way forward". My tutor commented that she had very much enjoyed reading my account, hoping that I had enjoyed writing it (I had), but that she did not believe in final endings. Thinking about that comment now, I wonder if I was actually trying to articulate my need to satisfy the restlessness inside me.

After the farmhouse, my children and I moved frequently until I remarried (my eldest daughter once told me how many primary schools she went to – guilt prevents me from recalculating it). With my second marriage came stability, and my children grew up and moved away to university in their turn. Our final move came about when I left classroom teaching to work in a university department some 50 miles away, and we moved to the place where we now live: we have been here for almost 18 years so far, with no intention of going anywhere else.

The sense of being unrooted, of seeking ... something, was satisfied to a large extent by the experience of a good marriage and satisfying work, although I was aware that part of the attraction for me in being a school teacher was that no two days were ever alike. My sense of restlessness did not disappear entirely, but was channelled into recognising that my teaching was never good enough, that there would always be a better way to teach a topic: I never understood people who claimed to use last year's teaching notes, as I always started from scratch when planning my lessons.

When I left classroom teaching to work in a schools' outreach programme, I was freed from the pressure of trying to get students through high stakes examinations. Preparing resources for other teachers to use as enrichment gave me the opportunity to present different ways into mathematical concepts, often through exploring

connections with other curriculum areas. I felt fulfilled by my work, realising that I was no longer looking around for something else. I could attribute this to age, but I am sure that the sense that I was using my God-given gifts to create the means by which others could find patterns and connections, and express them through maths, was more important. I felt that I was like the servant in the parable who was given five talents and doubled them (Matthew 25.14-30, Luke 19.12-27), that I was working with the grain of the universe. Following my ordination, I gradually became aware that this was not separate from my sense of vocation to priestly ministry, but was an important way in which that vocation would be expressed. Ultimately I am, and remain, a PSW because my secular work, both in education and in research, matters hugely to me, and, I believe, to God.

I cannot express it any better than these words from Charles Wesley's hymn, *O Thou Who Camest From Above*:

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire  
To work and speak and think for Thee;  
Still let me guard the holy fire,  
And still stir up Thy gift in me.

I chose this hymn for the service in which I first celebrated the eucharist, and for my licensing services since. It is a prayer which, I believe, finds its answer in my being a PSW, including through this research.

## **9.2 Interviewees' perspectives on finding God in and through their work**

We seek God by looking for evidence of God at work in the world (the *missio Dei*), and especially in and through our secular work. This leads us to work with God in and through work which we perceive to be God-given, using our God-given gifts: a means of participating in the *missio Dei*. Because we seek God in our everyday work, we understand that not only do we have to be prepared to 'get our hands dirty', but that it is part of our vocation to enable others to see God at work in the 'dirtiness' of everyday, secular life. We also understand that this requires us to accept that there may be a personal cost to this seeking of God.

### ***Seeking God in the world***

"There's a whole way of looking at life if you factor in even covertly the God of Jesus Christ", so said one of the interviewees. The context was his assertion that the "acid test for anything we do here" is "how does this proclaim Christ to the world?". This

question was specifically addressed in one of the four PSW narratives (section 7.3), but here I want to focus on that way of looking at life which is about seeking God through factoring in the God of Jesus Christ. Andrew ran to find his brother, Simon, to tell him that he and his companion had found the Messiah, that they had found that which they sought. For us, who live “in the theological interim between Pentecost and the Parousia”, the task is to “work out where God is”, to find the Messiah in our context. While acknowledging the challenges of this, the interviewees felt that it was a key part of their vocation to be people who had to engage with this task, and in so doing, to enable others to do the same; it is about helping lay Christians “to see and feel that everything that they do is part of vocation”, so that “people in their working lives feel that they are building the kingdom, one way or another”.

Reporting on her research, Garfield (2011, cf. chapter 1) claimed that for many lay Christians, the difficulty in making connections between everyday working life and what happens in church on Sundays leads people to compartmentalise them. The C of E has recently realised that there is thus work to be done in helping people to take their faith outside of the ‘Sunday box’ into the ‘weekday box’. *Setting God’s People Free* (Archbishops’ Council, 2017c) claims to be “a programme of change to enable the whole people of God to live out the Good News of Jesus confidently in all of life, Sunday to Saturday”. It acknowledges that “we, the Church of England, have been much stronger at freeing and equipping God’s people to serve Christ in church-based ministries than in their Monday to Saturday daily lives”. The programme wishes to meet this challenge in various ways (most requiring people to talk in church-based groups), but at no point does it mention the resource the C of E already contains: a group of people who have already had to do considerable hard thinking in precisely this area<sup>37</sup>. As one interviewee expressed it, “the secular world ... teaches you some ways of looking for God”, helping the PSW to discern God’s self-revelation “through the secular”.

In section 6.3, discussing what we mean by the categories ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’, I quoted words written by Etty Hillesum (Woodhouse, 2009), in which she affirmed the potential for everything to be sacred, together with an article in *The Church Times*, in which Eve Poole (2018) wrote that there is no secularity because “God made the world, and Christ redeemed it”. This argument depends on what precisely is meant by ‘secular’: is it that which is beyond redemption, or is that which is beyond the

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<sup>37</sup> In one diocese, however, the Bishop’s Officer for Lay Learning and Formation requested me to write a set of resources to be used in churches on ‘Setting God’s People Free Sunday’. These are included in this thesis as Appendix 7.

bounds of the institutional church? For the PSW, it is important, with Hillesum, to recognise the potential for finding the sacred in the most unlikely places, and with Poole, to believe that nowhere is beyond Christ's redemption. Indeed, being a PSW "is not merely what some people do with their ministry, or one of many patterns of ministry ... it actually reflects a whole theological pattern for thinking about God, that he's [*sic*] relevant also to, well, the whole of creation", as one interviewee put it. This is discussed in detail in section 6.4, where I use the two cities of Revelation (Babylon and Jerusalem) and of Augustine (the *civitas terrena* and the *civitas Dei*) in considering God's involvement in the world and in the church, and the relationship between them.

The question about what it means to look for God and proclaim God in the secular is one which it is easy to answer in a trivial way, so losing sight of deeper issues. Although the word 'proclaim', used by one interviewee, suggests active declaration of God's presence, it was more nuanced than that for all the interviewees. All of them were open about their ordination as priests, in that their secular colleagues all knew. However, for some that was as far as it could go, since any indication that they were engaged in evangelism with others in the workplace would have precipitated disciplinary proceedings. One, a counsellor, talked about how he would make "God explicit within the situation, without necessarily the other person in the situation having any grasp of what I was thinking or pointing to". When I asked him to explain what he meant by this – since I could not see how God could be made explicit in such a way – he continued:

I think explicit can be explicit to self, but also I could make God explicit by making the love of God, which is implicit anyway, explicit or more explicit to that person, without it being obvious to that person that we're actually talking about the divine *per se*.

What I think this argument is doing, is to equate the presence of God with the explicit love of God, expressed in and through the care and respect the interviewee would give to his clients: God's name does not need to be mentioned for God to be present and active through love, which is God's self-expression. This interpretation is confirmed by something the interviewee said later: "God expresses himself [*sic*] ... not only through those who are aware of him, but also through those who are not aware of him". This view was also articulated by another interviewee, talking of a colleague who is a self-confessed atheist, but whom the interviewee saw as part of the work of God in their workplace, through their mutual involvement in support of colleagues.

The interviewee did not claim that making God explicit (however done) was the exclusive preserve of the PSW, indeed, he was careful not to do so, because “if you are a priest, or even maybe a Christian in the workplace and taking your faith seriously, you are plunged into that, it is asked of you”. However, he felt that for FTSS (having been one himself):

... there is so much in stipendiary ministry that is both busy and really rather ecclesiastical. And so the notion for a stipendiary priest that one might spend a significant part of your time seeing God as he [*sic*] is made manifest by himself in the world, in a way that is not actually terribly obvious – it’s rather difficult to do that from a stipendiary point of view, I think.

Early in his interview, I had asked him to tell me about “the difference between being an MSE, and between being a parish priest”. He responded:

... the thing I loved about MSE was having to make sense of it as a Christian vocation, as a seeking of God in God’s world, as a seeking of the resurrection of Christ in God’s world, in settings that were non-religious, by and large.

Later in our conversation, he expressed it thus:

... the non-stipendiary ministry is important, but MSE is not merely non-stipendiary, it’s secular. I think if – oh, well, that’s it, at a profound but simple level, it asserts that religion is secular as well as religious. Otherwise, one comes across people, clergy and laity alike, who trap, ok, so, into quotes the religious.

<Put it into the Sunday box, you mean?>

Or into very religious categories that are – that go unchallenged.

I feel this is a really important point to make, that the PSW (MSE) is “not merely non-stipendiary”, but “secular”. The secular is not beyond God’s redemption, and one way in which God’s presence in the secular is made apparent is through the presence there, and the work of, the PSW. The presence of the PSW will be revisited in chapter 10; the PSW’s work is the topic of the next section.

### ***Seeking God through work***

If the PSW is called to seek God in the world outside the church, then that clearly includes the workplace. However, I want to go beyond affirming the PSW’s vocation to seek God in people or in places, and to consider their vocation to seek God through their secular work.

One of the CIG was ordained priest in her early twenties, but later decided to exercise her priestly vocation part-time in the church, and part-time through her own business; the other three (myself included) had been ordained towards the end of successful secular careers. Similarly, for four of the interviewees, ordination did not present them with an alternative to their pre-existing secular work, but would be something they needed to understand as part of a vocation which included that secular work. The other two interviewees had started out as FTSs, leaving parish ministry to become PSWs because they came to see their priestly vocation as including secular work. One of these was still in full-time secular work at the time of our interview; the other had decided to return to full-time parish ministry for the final five years of his working life after many years in secular work.

It became clear early in the CIG discussions that our secular work mattered to us all, so during the morning I spent with each interviewee, I asked them specifically about their secular work: what they did, for how long they had been doing it, why they had not given it up for full-time parish ministry. Answering, one of the teachers told me an anecdote about an occasion when she was having lunch with her husband in a pub, which she repeated in the recorded interview:

... this man came up to me and he said, 'I'm in the Merchant Navy now, because of you. ... You were so strict, and you made me work and I got that B, and without it I'd have never been able to do what I always wanted'. And that kind of thing happens to me, not a lot, not every time I go out, but enough times for me to feel, well, I did it right.

She believed that her work as a teacher mattered, because

... a good education allowed a person to become the person God ordained them to be. I mean, ordained in its widest sense – God designed them to be, made them to be. ... And I drove myself as a teacher to enable as many children as possible to achieve their potential.

As another interviewee, also employed in a 'caring' profession, observed, it is easy to see this kind of work as part of the PSW vocation, but interviewees, whose work was not so obviously understood in this way, also affirmed their sense of their secular work being part of their vocation. One interviewee, who summed up his work as being a bureaucrat, took pride in being good at his job, pleased that a line manager, in an annual appraisal, had said to him "you didn't accept the call to be a priest in the church of God to be a bureaucrat, but it doesn't stop you being good at it". Later he reaffirmed that "for me it's [being a priest] the core and I happen to be a bureaucrat. But I think it's a good way at the moment of using my God-given skills".

Another interviewee emphasised: “you have to do a decent job of whatever it is you’re being paid for”. In her follow-up interview, she expressed very clearly “the feeling that your work is valuable to God” in and for itself. She saw an important part of what she does in the church as “valuing what everybody does, it’s not just the work you do for the church, it’s not for being the church treasurer, or running the Sunday School, or the coffee rota”. In her first interview, she had talked about a person who ran the coffee rota seeing that as her service to God, but ignoring all that she did in her job as a hairdresser: this was not simply about chatting or listening to her clients, but that, by doing her work well: “she’s making them feel better because they look a little bit better”, which is “a hugely important service to other people”. The interviewee who worked in health and safety talked about the importance of what he did because “it looks after people’s wellbeing”, continuing that he was very thorough, and would not let things go. Later he talked about an occasion when

... they asked me to close their [IT] systems down – bring it down to auditable level. I had a few directors a bit upset with me, because I took lots of privileges away from them, but they accepted it in the end.

Without exception, the interviewees all saw their work as important for its own sake, as well as when it contributed to people’s wellbeing. As one put it, “if one suspects it doesn’t matter, then you lose a grip on the importance of the whole of your work”. He then questioned whether his faith made him better at his job than his secular colleagues, a question which I considered in the narrative ‘does it make any difference to how we do our jobs?’ (section 7.2). He concluded that it would be arrogant to say that it did, and, of course, he would never know if he would have been worse at his job if he were not a priest, or a person of faith, and so: “I think the two eyes, where one says, yeah, it’s important; and the other, no, it doesn’t make me better, are both important to me”.

The interviewees’ view that their secular work mattered in and for itself, and that doing it well was an important way in which they realised their vocations, helps to confirm my feeling that work is a primary theological category (section 6.3). As Sayers (1947, p. 47) wrote, work is a way in which human nature finds “its proper exercise and delight and so fulfils itself to the glory of God”, or as *Laborem exercens* (John Paul II, 1981, para 3, original italics) put it: “human work is a key, probably *the essential key*” to making “life more human”. Whether this is co-creation with God, as *Laborem exercens* claimed, or simply engagement with God in God’s work (the *missio Dei*), does not appear to me be the fundamental issue, which is that this world, all of it, is part of God’s creation, and so part of what God wills to redeem (cf. section 6.4). Not all work is good work, however, and this is the subject of the next section.



### ***Seeking God in the mess***

As one of the interviewees put it, “God in the mass on Sunday, God in the mess on Monday”. This was said in the context of describing how she saw her vocation as different from that of the FTS:

I think it’s partly because people who have spent most of their life in full-time parish-based ministry simply don’t have the same experiences, which have been gained in contexts that they may have been somehow or other trained to regard as slightly iffy. I mean, all this management stuff and money, and decisions, and risk-taking and so on, and that’s not what, that’s not what you’re about if you’re a member of the clergy. That’s messy stuff, somehow.

A little later she commented that

... there may be a feeling that secular management is nasty, and sacks people, and disciplines people, and things, and if we are – I caricature to a certain extent – but if we’re nice, holy people, we don’t behave in that sort of way, we have a different way of going about things.

Another interviewee expressed a sense of frustration:

... that they [FTSs] compartmentalise their life a lot, and they don’t recognise that the world is a bit more messy than it used to be. And for things like protected sabbath time, I’m in absolute agreement – in absolute agreement that we should all have a day off a week, and I accept that, and I think that’s great – I wish I did every – but when you come across stumbling blocks, like, no, I can’t do that, it’s my day off ...

Yet another interviewee described doing some work with a group of FTSs working in “some of the tough, outer estates around the cities of Britain” who are “fantastic, they’re deeply interested in their parishes and the people, in the culture, and so on”. He found, however, that “when we moved from reflection to action, something kind of drains out of the conversation”. His point was that in his job he has to identify a problem, decide what is to be done about it, by whom, by when, and how “will we know we’ve done it?”, and “so the work ethic is different”.

As the excerpts above show, the interviewees felt that the FTS is to some extent protected from many of the issues with which the PSW has to grapple. Although one commented that it was “a bit of a doddle” to “join the dots” to see how one might seek God in professions such as teaching and counselling, dedicating one’s “working life ... to helping other people grow”, he also talked about an MSE he had known who

was a secretary to a small building firm: “maybe a building site is a good place to spend time, but you have to discover why”. Later, he mentioned an occasion when his wife, who was a school teacher at the time, was

... doing some work on the workplace, and she realised after a bit that there was a look of incomprehension, because she was actually reflecting on her own experience of working as a school teacher. But she’d got a class of kids, all of whose fathers were employed on the track at Chrysler, where the question why are you here, and there was only one answer, it pays better than anywhere else, but that it’s no way to spend time really ...

The alienation of work was an issue for another interviewee, specifically the situation of

... a guy who used to help me with the youth club, who was a machine operator, lathe operator. He said, ‘I’ve worked there for’, I can’t remember, thirty odd years. ‘I have never known what it is I am making. I simply make a part to the drawing, and I don’t know what it is, or what it’ll be used for.’

The interviewee continued:

... we had someone – we were very short of church wardens, and someone who always came to church with his family said, ‘Do you have to be confirmed to be a church warden?’, and well, yeah, yes, you do, actually. He said, ‘Well, I can’t do it then. I’d be very happy to be church warden, but if I got confirmed, I would have to take seriously the ethics of what I do in weapons research, Monday to Friday. And I have a mortgage to pay, and I have kids to support, and it’s a question I dare not let myself ask ...

It was issues like these which led to his leaving full-time parish ministry to pursue a vocation as a PSW, because “it was work questions people were bringing into their engagement with the church, and we didn’t know how to deal with them”, “it was about people’s working lives”. Involved in research about the experience of people who had gone into their professions, believing them to be part of their Christian vocation, he discovered that when they experienced problems, such as “bankers saying ‘I thought my job was to manage money responsibly, and now I am simply there to sell financial products to people who often will be disadvantaged by buying them’”, that the responses of the participants’ churches fell into three categories:

One, is I’ll pray for you; one is, why don’t you get another job; and the other is blank incomprehension, that was the gamut of response from the ministers, the clergy.

As far as he was concerned, the church had totally failed to connect with the very real problems which lay Christians encounter in their workplaces, because work is not always good. Because of that, the workplace is the place the PSW is called to be:

It was tough. And, in a way, I think one of the things I enjoyed about the [workplace], was working with the tough bits because that way we were working with the real, and, in some sense, that we can't be so precious about our place, that we have always to be pure ... [we have to] be happy to get our hands dirty, or else who will?

For me, it is an article of faith that God cares for all creation, and so there can be no workplaces or workers who are beyond redemption. Volf's argument (1991, cf. section 6.3), that human work matters, because it contributes to the eschatological building of God's kingdom, the *missio Dei*, is therefore one that appeals to me, and that is the context in which I see the secular work of the PSW. Our work matters to God, so it matters that we do it well, and that we find ways to engage with the messy issues that workplaces throw at us. There is a personal cost to this, however, and that is the next aspect of secular work that I consider.

### ***Accepting the cost***

One of the teachers told me about two funerals, of husbands of work colleagues, that she had taken:

One in particular was personally costly, because the widow is ... in her mid- to late-thirties, two young children and her husband killed himself. And I knew him, because she was in my department, and so we mingled socially. And I didn't know him as a close friend, and we – [her husband, who was her incumbent at the time] and I, together, or I, I can't remember now, but they came to us for the baptism of their younger child. And so there were former colleagues there who turned to me for support at the funeral, and I was supporting [the widow] and her children, and her parents and his parents. And because I also wanted to know why – where he killed himself was in his place of work, which was in our parish – why didn't he think he could come here? ... Also, one time she wanted to talk to me, but turned up at church five minutes before the service started, and I spent half the service standing in the graveyard talking to her, because she knew where she'd find me at that time. So there was a personal cost in my sense of loss, and puzzlement about the finality and desperation of the situation. But the ongoing cost of [the widow's] very difficult journey, because, obviously, I'm walking with her on it.

In addition to supporting the widow, the parents, and work colleagues, there were also the two young children to consider, so she had planned a funeral which would include them:

I've never done one like that before, and I had to make it up. And I think that is part of the challenge where people turn to me from my secular world of work, they don't know how church does things, but they want me to be church for them their way.

Almost all ministers will have had the experience of taking a difficult funeral, and will know the personal cost in walking alongside the mourners: this is part of funeral ministry. However, I think there is something qualitatively different about the ministry of the interviewee to her bereaved colleague, because their relationship as secular colleagues is different from the relationship between a priest and a parishioner, even if previously well known. The closest parallel I have come across is the funeral which an incumbent I know had to conduct for one of her church wardens, who had also, over the years, become a personal friend.

A less extreme personal cost was described by another interviewee, when he said: "I've looked at other jobs, and thought my time is up, and God quite happily bangs me on the shoulders and says, 'No, you're still needed here'." In general, the interviewees were content with their lot, finding "a lot of fulfilment and a great deal of joy" in doing what they do, but were prepared to accept that there might be a personal cost, which is inherent in taking discipleship seriously.

### 9.3 Conclusion: Working with God in the *missio Dei*

As one of the interviewees put it:

What gets me up in the morning? What gets me up is thinking that I can play my part in building God's kingdom here on earth, a bit, at the [workplace], or in the parish and that, for me, is a huge sense of joy and achievement. ... that privilege of knowing that you are doing God's work is incredibly joyful and affirming ....

Like Andrew, we seek the Messiah; we seek to work with God. We work with God as best we can because that is what God has asked us to do, in part because it fulfils us and our sense of vocation, but also because, as priests, we work with others, enabling them to recognise this sense of calling for themselves. It's "all around the idea of *missio Dei*, really", because "ordinary people [need to be able to] see and feel

that everything that they do is part of vocation, in inverted commas, or building the kingdom, or service to God, or whatever particular terms you want to use for it”.

Being part of the *missio Dei*, helping to build the kingdom, should be the *raison d'être* of any Christian; for the PSW, their involvement in secular work, together with their church-based ministry, is the context in which: “We are required to help build God’s kingdom here on earth, that’s what it’s about”.

In this age, the *saeculum*, all is subject both to sin and to God’s transforming work, the church no less than a factory or a weapons research establishment, but if this present age is to be annihilated at the Parousia (cf. the discussion in section 6.4), then nothing we do now is of any real significance. Jesus’ incarnation is the evidence that God has not abandoned this world, however, and so Andrew’s recognition that, in meeting Jesus, he had found the Messiah is the answer to ‘what do you seek?’. We seek the Messiah, because we know at some level that we want to be part of Jerusalem, not Babylon, to be heirs of Christ rather than Adam: “every human being is an heir of Adam and suffers the same alienation from self and from other persons and creatures – which also means estrangement from God” (Stringfellow, 1973, p. 129), but by the grace of God, we can be heirs of Christ (Romans 5.12-21).

PSWs too seek the Messiah, doing what they can to embody God’s transforming love through their work and through all that they do to contribute to the *missio Dei*. The PSW’s commitment to their work, even though it is not perfect and there may be difficult ethical issues to be resolved, is one way of saying that what we do now does matter, that it is of ultimate significance: “why or what we do may be of little worth in some ways, and we shouldn’t insist that it’s different from that. Nevertheless, it’s as though it is of huge worth, if you see what I mean?”.



## 10 Where are you staying?

And John [the Baptist] testified, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained (*emeinen*) on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, "he on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain (*menon*) is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.'

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, 'Look, here is the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ... They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which translated means Teacher), 'where are you staying (*meneis*)?' He said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where he was staying (*menei*), and they remained (*emeinan*) with him that day. (John 1.32-36, 38b-39)

The words translated 'staying' and 'remain(ed)' in this passage are forms of the Greek *menein*, which is preserved in the English 'remain' and 'maintain'. *Menein* is an important verb in John's gospel, not least in chapter 15, where it is generally translated 'abide'.

For Quash (2012), John's account of the baptism of Jesus shows "an atmosphere of mystical stillness", compared to the "public and populated scene ... narrated in the synoptic Gospels". Consequently, when Andrew and his companion ask Jesus 'where are you staying/abiding', "it is hard not to feel that this is a mystical as well as a practical question" (p. 213). On one level, they want to know the house in which Jesus is staying, "but whether they know it or not they are also asking a profound question about where Jesus's *eternally*-abiding 'home' is" (p. 213, original italics). When Jesus told them to come and see, and then they remain (*emeinan*) with him, they "become participants in the divine activity of abiding. They dwell in and with God" (p. 214).

This story is not simply about the response of two individuals to Jesus, however, but recounts Jesus' calling into being the messianic community, formed of those who recognise him as Messiah, which will accompany him from that point onwards, and will abide with him in his eternal home, through the work of the Holy Spirit. The

### Glossary

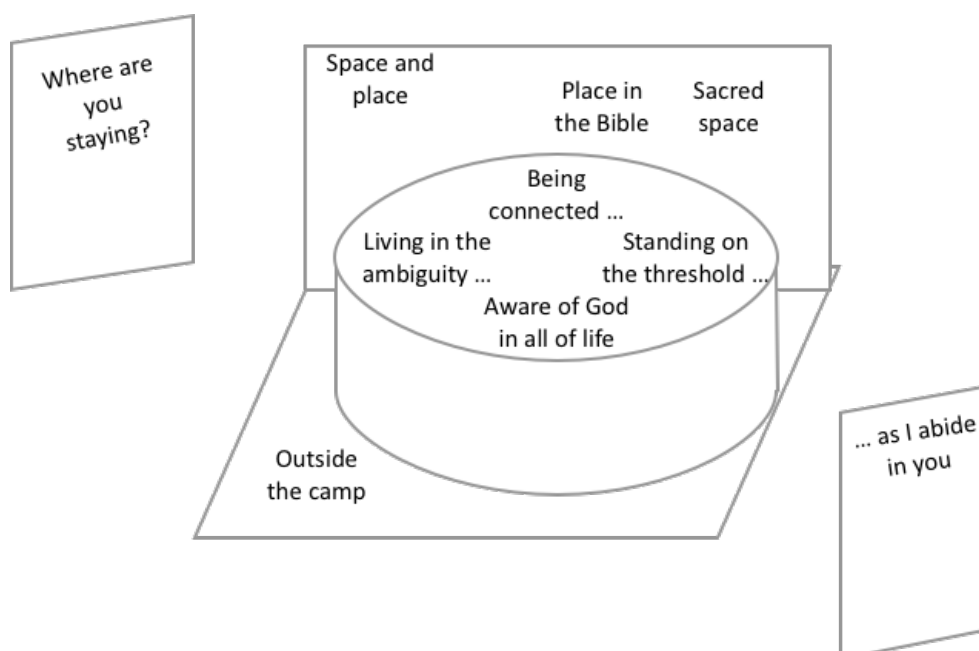
C of E	Church of England
IPA	Interpretative phenomenological analysis
NSM	Non-stipendiary minister/ministry
PSW	Priest in secular work
<...>	Interviewer question or response in a quotation from an interview
[...]	Editorial interpolation in a quotation

church is the post-Pentecost continuation of that messianic community, in which ordinary people become aware of the Messiah in their midst and, finding where he is, remain/abide with him.

Staying/remaining/abiding is on one level about place – Andrew and his companion wanted to know where Jesus was living. Since these English words all translate the Greek *menein*, this also suggests a metaphorical level which is about presence. From the IPA superordinate themes of ‘church/secular interface’, ‘holding the tension’, and ‘aware of God in all of life’, I have constructed an argument which leads into conceptualising the PSW as an embodiment of sacramental presence. This chapter is the third and final discussion of what I consider to be an essential facet of the PSW, in which a questioning hermeneutic is used to perform the second level of the IPA.

The elements in this narrative are illustrated diagrammatically in Figure 10. The opening question, ‘where are you staying?’, opens into a background of theology of place, subdivided into space and place, place in the Bible, and sacred space; the discussion is grounded in an exploration of what ‘outside the camp’ (cf. Hebrews 13.13) means in the Christian tradition. This literature (described in detail in sections 6.3 and 6.4) acts as a lens through which I consider excerpts from the interview transcripts in order to explore the way in which the interviewees saw themselves as living in the ambiguity, standing on the threshold, and making connections, through being aware of God in all of life. The final panel in the diagram, entitled ‘... as I abide in you’, builds on this and on John 15 to conceptualise the PSW as embodying sacramental presence.

**Figure 10: Curating ‘where are you staying?’**





## 10.1 As a PSW, how do I answer the question: ‘where are you staying?’

In early work in this research, and in earlier drafts of this chapter, I focused on exile as a significant theme both in the Bible and in my own story. I entitled my first paper for this research *How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land? On being a minister in secular employment* (Gage, 2013). I find Psalm 137<sup>38</sup> evokes memories of dislocation for me, and the cry from the heart which formed the title of that paper is one I have wrestled with, particularly in the early years after my ordination. I have come to see, however, that the resonance is not about exile, but about strange lands and finding that God is present there. I found Christopher Rowland’s description of Babylon as both the place of exile, but also symbolic of the challenge of “being confronted by an alien set of values, cultural and political dislocation, and the necessity of negotiating a way of existing in that situation” (Bennett and Rowland, 2016, p. 96), helpful in enabling me to make some sense of why the theme of exile still resonates for me, and why I still feel it needs a place here. That was strengthened when I read Stringfellow’s (1973, pp. 156-157) claim that Revelation 21.2-6a is the answer to Psalm 137.4.

When my children were small, my then-husband’s job took us to Arizona for almost six months, returning for a short visit home during the Christmas break. I arrived knowing no one but my own immediate family, needing to make many adjustments to life in a very different culture. It was indeed a strange land: something as simple as going shopping proved challenging (admittedly with a baby in a push-chair) until I realised that American cities are constructed on the premise that everyone drives everywhere, and because no one walks, there is no need for pavements (sidewalks) or pedestrian routes. Key to settling in, so that the strange gradually became familiar, were relationships: there was the young mother I met in the line for the immunisation clinic<sup>39</sup>; there was the principal of the pre-school in which I enrolled my middle two

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<sup>38</sup> Although I struggle with the violence of the final verses, with the reference to dashing babies against the rock, understanding Babylon as the place of violence and death provides a frame of reference in which it can be understood (cf. section 6.4).

<sup>39</sup> If my eldest daughter was to go to school, she needed the precise immunisation schedule required in Arizona. Part of the cultural adjustment I had yet to make was realising that having health insurance meant that I could simply have taken her to see a pediatrician, rather than waiting in line for the free, public clinic.

children; and there were people from a nearby church who heard that there was a new family in the neighbourhood and called round to visit us.

As I think about that time, however, what is uppermost in my mind is the desert: nothing in my previous experience had prepared me for its impact. We spent most weekends driving vast distances across the Arizona deserts to go to places like the Grand Canyon, the Painted Desert and the Petrified Forest. We went up into Utah to see the 'badlands' and into New Mexico, California and Nevada. The first time we went to the Grand Canyon, soon after our arrival, we left Phoenix in hot sunshine, the children in shorts and T-shirts. By the time we reached Flagstaff, less than three hours later but some 1800m higher, it was snowing and we had to stop to buy warm jumpers and trousers. Everything in Arizona was on a completely different scale from home: the colours, the extremes of temperature, the vast emptiness of the desert, the distances between one town and the next. It was also more hostile than home: no sooner had we arrived in our rented home, than the man who sprayed everywhere to ensure that we were not troubled by poisonous spiders and scorpions arrived with his equipment, warning me to keep the mesh screens closed on windows and doors, and not to hang my laundry outside to dry, because I would bring it in full of insects, some of them better avoided.

The church we settled in was not the large First Baptist Church that we tried first, but a small neighbourhood southern Baptist congregation. Week by week, we went to Sunday School classes for an hour, and then into worship for an hour. We heard altar call after altar call, and listened to many personal testimonies (often repeated a week or two later). Theologically, we came from a very different tradition; yet the welcome was sincere, and the hospitality felt limitless.

It was a formative time in my life, a time when I realised how big the world is, and how much there is to experience. It was a time when I realised that familial and societal restrictions on what the mother of small children could/should (not) do were not sacrosanct, and that not only was I perfectly capable of making my way in a new and very different environment, but I could make a success of it. It was a time when I indulged my desire to see more and to experience more, to test out all kinds of limits, taking my family with me, willing or otherwise. I fell in love with the desert extremes, with the colours, the landscapes, the amazing variety of plants squeezing life out of a hostile environment.

I also led us into potential disaster. We took our family-sized (but small by American standards) car, with ordinary tyres, up into a mountainous area where the roads were closed other than to four-wheel drive vehicles. The landscape was empty and

phenomenally beautiful: drifting virgin snow blowing across yellowy-green grass tussocks as far as the eye could see, and blue, blue skies. And then the car skidded, leaving the road, and landing up in the bushes, close to a sheer drop. My husband tried to reverse it back onto the road, without success. I was terrified that he would end up sliding over the edge. We were saved when a passing truck stopped, and the driver brought out his hauling ropes and pulled the car back to safety.

I am still attracted to empty places, and I still prefer to locate myself at the edges of the communities of which I am a part. A few years ago, leading worship for a small rural congregation, I preached a sermon based on the song *A Horse With No Name*<sup>40</sup>, in which the line “I’ve been through the desert on a horse with no name” occurs several times. That sermon no longer exists on my computer, and I do not remember what my point was, other than that “In the desert you can remember your name”. For me, being “outside the camp” (cf. Hebrews 13.13-14) is the place where I feel free, where I feel my soul expanding, where, because I know my name, I meet the God who calls me by that name<sup>41</sup>, the place where God abides with me, and I can know God’s presence without all the distraction with which I am generally surrounded.

## 10.2 Interviewees’ perspectives

In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus is frequently to be found in marginal places, in the wilderness (eg. Mark 1) and around the Sea of Galilee (eg. Mark 7.31). Malbon (1984, p. 363) has argued that the Sea of Galilee “is the geographical focal point for the first half of the Gospel of Mark, the center [*sic*] of the Marcan Jesus’ movement in space”. “In crossing the sea [*sic*], Jesus may also be said to cross traditional limits” (p. 364): he is in neither Jewish nor Gentile territory, but between the two. The Sea is not a barrier to him (p. 375), but is the place where he demonstrates his power over the elements, symbolised by the water as the realm of chaos, compared to the land as the place of promise (p. 375, cf. Brueggemann, 1978). The Sea becomes an extension of the land for Jesus (p. 377), a means by which he demonstrates God’s kingdom coming into effect.

The interviewees used various metaphors to instance their awareness of their presence in similarly ambiguous and marginal places, such as bridges or stepping stones. In what follows, I discuss how their presence contributes to the *missio Dei*.

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<sup>40</sup> Written by Dewey Bunnell, recorded by *America* in 1971.

<sup>41</sup> “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. ... everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.” (Isaiah 43.1-7)

### ***Living in the ambiguity***

In section 6.3, I discussed whether this age, the *saeculum*, is destined for annihilation or redemption (cf. Volf, 1991; *Laborem exercens*, John Paul II, 1981). This is not a new question: for Irenaeus, the belief that this creation would be annihilated was an aspect of the gnostic heresy which he opposed (*Against Heresies*, 1885). Rather than focusing on the question of annihilation here, my focus is the ambiguity of living with the reality of both sin and grace, and the effect of that ambiguity on our structures of ministry. As one of the interviewees put it:

It's actually living in that ambiguity that's at the heart of what living as a Christian is about, and so the search for erasing ambiguity from structures of ministry is fated to fail.

He defined this ambiguity as “living in the theological interim between Pentecost and the Parousia”, in which we “live with the grace of the Holy Spirit, and we live with the persistence of sin”. My interpretation of what this interviewee meant is that in this age, there is no possibility of perfect Christian living: inevitably we will fail. Because of that, there is also no possibility of finding a perfect structure of ministry for the church: the church and its ministry is also under both sin and grace (cf. Bonhöffer, 1955), and so are just as much in need of the redemptive activity of God. For the interviewee, this is the reason that we need an ordained priesthood:

We are a priesthood of all believers, but because of our sinful natures we can't do that ultimately collective thing, and we have to have some who are set apart to do it in a very focused way, and in public.

Following Augustine, Markus (1970, p. 23) discussed how this is the age of the gospel and the church, the age in which humans “are reformed in the image of God”. There will be no final separation of what is redeemable and what is not until the final judgement, and for that reason, this age is inherently provisional and ambiguous in its nature (p. 173). The church and the world are inseparable, both part of what is sacred, because redeemable, and part of what is profane. As Bonhöffer (1955) argued, the vocation of the church is to witness to that redemption: I feel that understanding and affirming the presence of PSWs in workplaces is one way in which the C of E could so witness.

### ***Standing on the threshold***

In one of the follow-up interviews, I asked the interviewee if there was anything she wanted to add to what we had already discussed. She responded:

There is one thing I'd like to add that I probably didn't communicate, which is, it's wonderful, a wonderful role, if you're the right person. If you don't mind being outside the city gates, or just standing on the threshold with your head swivelling both ways in and out.

The ambiguity discussed above means that there is no 'pure' church already destined for redemption, any more than any part of the world outside the church is inevitably destined for annihilation. The parable of the wheat and the tares, referenced by Augustine (section 6.4) in discussing the relationship between church and world, asserts that there can be no clear boundary between the church and the world (cf. Bonhöffer, 1955; also France, 2006, who argued that this is a matter of ecclesiology, and that rural village churches in particular cannot be communities of the saved only). Being outside the city gates, standing on the threshold, are metaphors which express the place that all priests need to occupy *vis-à-vis* church and world. They do, of course – no priest lives entirely within the confines of the institutional church – however, the particular vocation of the PSW ensures that this issue is fore-grounded.

The admission in *Setting God's People Free* (Archbishops' Council, 2017c) that “we, the Church of England, have been much stronger at freeing and equipping God's people to serve Christ in church-based ministries than in their Monday to Saturday daily lives” suggests that the church has not encouraged people to go to the margins, to look out as well as in. One interviewee, talking about the difficulty in providing resources which actually help people in this, speculated that “those trying to respond are so trammelled by the way the church does things, that it can't actually equip people for a very unchurch-y context”. His claim, that there is an “existential gap between discipleship and being a worker”, suggests that he does not think the church, in its institutional form, is in fact able to equip people “to follow Jesus confidently wherever they are” (Archbishops' Council, 2017c).

### ***Being connected***

This is what you do, this is how priesthood is connected, it's connected with the South African dockers and the English dockers, even though they don't care about each other. And so it's all – all – for me, it was about people at work, it wasn't about a sector of ministry it was about the life of the people, from the people in the weapons research station through to the dockers, and the shop workers.

This interviewee was explaining to me why he had decided to leave parish ministry to focus on ministry with people at work. His explanation took us through many stories about the working lives of people he had known, which had contributed to his

decision. It is not the stories that are the focus of this section, however, but his comment – a brief remark in the midst of the stories – that “this is how priesthood is connected”. In chapter 1, I described how I happened to look through a book on NSM in the 1970s (Hodge, 1983), and that, in my memory, I read something about the difficulty the NSMs experienced in trying to hold the tension of being simultaneously in secular work and in parish ministry. As I explained there, this comment is not in fact in the book, but nevertheless has proved seminal for me throughout this research. Holding the tension, it seems to me, is how priests connect people and things which would not otherwise be connected: for the PSW, it is about connecting the church and the secular workplace, “it’s about being seen as a person who is the church throughout the week”, who bridges “the existential gap between discipleship and being a worker”, so enabling “the everyday, the quotidian [to become] sacred”.

As one interviewee argued, there is a gap in language between the church and the workplace. He illustrated his point with a story about the Sheffield industrial missionaries going into the steelworks, but being unable to bridge the gap between the church and the steelworkers. For him, this is an example of the need for “constant translation and iteration of theological language and secular language”. He went on to talk about needing to speak Creole “where you can be understood by both [Pidgin speakers and home language speakers] simultaneously, although you’re not speaking either fluently, totally fluently”. A little later, he modified this slightly, saying:

... it’s not just translation, we have to find the language that can encompass all of them, even though you might skew it slightly differently for different audiences. If it were just translation, you could challenge the nature of the translation: is this really that? But if you can talk the Creole ... you can be understood.

This raises an interesting point about the need to be understood in a way that does not open us to challenge because our translation is inexact, but is comprehensible on all levels.

He also told the story of the French worker priest who went to work for Euro Disney, because his bishop was concerned about the welfare of the Euro Disney employees<sup>42</sup>. The priest “insisted, he held out to drive the train” because “that got him round the site and he could talk unaccompanied with other workers”. He also

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<sup>42</sup> <https://www.deseretnews.com/article/317706/EURO-DISNEY-IS-HELLISH-WORKPLACE-PRIEST-REPORTS.html>, accessed 31 January 2019.

“made an alliance with the local parish priest” so that he could create “a safe haven in a local parish church outside the Euro Disney site”. Another story concerned a railway chaplain he had known:

... he knew that a gang of platelayers got together for tea in this dirty old cabin miles down a line; and he'd wander down the trackside and go and sit with them. Month after month they'd cut him dead, and didn't – wouldn't speak to him, wouldn't respond, and he just sat and went there faithfully every month until someone turned to him and said, 'You must have a hide like a [expletive] rhino!' and the ice was broken ...

The point of these stories was to illustrate how priests can make connections, how they can learn to speak the Creole, which enables them to be church for people who would not otherwise encounter the church. It requires them to hold the tension between contexts which are existentially quite separate, “to straddle the gap” and allow people to “walk over you”.

### ***Aware of God in all of life***

A major theme in the Hebrew scriptures, however, is the tension the people felt between knowing God was with them, symbolised in the ark of the covenant in the wilderness years, and then in the temple, and having to discover where God is when the temple is destroyed, and the people are in exile (“How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?”, Psalm 137.4). Brueggemann (2002) claimed that “the central problem is not emancipation but *rootage*, not meaning but *belonging*, not separation from community but *location* within it, not isolation from others but *placement*” (pp. 199-200). Because the place of exile is not the place of belonging, it is a place where God has to be sought, where God's presence cannot be taken for granted.

In section 6.3, I considered what makes a particular place sacred, quoting Etty Hillesum's account of finding a sacred place in her bathroom (Woodhouse, 2009, pp. 40-41). A bathroom is not sacred in itself, but because Hillesum found herself kneeling there in prayer, it became so. Places become sacred for people because God has revealed Godself there, or at least there is a sense of transcendence, of being on holy ground (eg. the burning bush and Jacob's ladder). Brown (2004, pp. 153-154) claimed that every place human beings go has the potential to act sacramentally, because “God can be experienced in speaking either through the place as found or else as it has now been contextualized”.

The PSW lives with ambiguity, on the threshold between the church and the workplace, connecting people and things which are not otherwise connected: to do this requires recognising that their vocation is one, and that it is to be aware of God in all of life, and to find ways to witness to God's presence (cf. Bonhöffer, 1955, p. 68), even if explicit words would not be permissible. For one of the interviewees, who would not have been allowed to mention God or anything to do with religion in his work as a counsellor, he felt he could nevertheless make God explicit through channelling God's love to a person in distress (this is discussed in sections 7.3 and 9.2). Another interviewee talked about "being a presence, of bringing the church into the community in a very tangible way", by which he meant that because he was a priest, he brought the church with him "meeting people where they're at". For another, it was being "like St Paul, ... out and about, part of the community", which meant that "I am you, I am part of you".

One interviewee told a story about an ordinand he had known, who worked on the railways, who said "I want to know what it means to be a priest on the line side", to which the interviewee replied "You'll only find out by doing it, so get on with it. ... I think he thought there was an answer: you do this and you don't do that, but he learnt it wasn't like that at all". We find out what it means to be priests in whatever our contexts are through being "committed to contemplation that others may not be, [recognising] that the contemplation is not essential, but is perhaps sufficient to the expression of God". The contemplation of God in the workplace then enables the PSW to see God's work there, or as one interviewee put it, to see how "the gifts of the Spirit can be worked out in the secular world".

### **10.3 Conclusion: sacramental presence**

Earlier in this chapter, I used an analogy given by one of the interviewees, that the task of the PSW is to straddle the existential gap between discipleship and working life. In retrospect, I wish I had asked him to say a bit more about this, because in this section, I want to present the PSW as a sacramental presence, part of how God intends this gap to be straddled. The PSW is called to places which are 'outside the camp', but these are the places of vocation, places where the church is called to fight "for the salvation of the world" (Bonhöffer, 1955, p. 68).

John 14-17 contains Jesus' farewell discourse, with John 15 including the well-known allegory of the vine, in which Jesus is the vine, the disciples are the branches, and the Father is the vine-grower. Abiding in Jesus, and having Jesus abide in the believer, as the branches are part of the vine, is a key theme of this gospel, realised through Jesus' sacrificial love. In his meditation on this chapter, Vanier wrote:



The Word became flesh  
 in order to lead us into communion with God.  
 He came to bridge the gap  
 that separates weak and vulnerable human beings from God. ...  
 But he came not only to dwell in us  
 but also to act in and through us,  
 to give life to others, in and through us.  
 We are called to participate in the creative and loving activity of God.  
 We will bear much fruit if we dwell in God. (Vanier, 2004, p. 267)

As the PSW abides in God, so God abides in the PSW, and so the PSW, called to work with God in the *missio Dei*, is enabled to be a means by which God can act in the world: in so doing, the PSW is a sacramental presence. This is illustrated by this excerpt from an interview with one of the teachers, describing a ritual she had devised:

... their last Year 11 lesson before they took their exams ... I told them this would be happening, I gave them a little speech, and it was always about how important they were, how valuable they were as individuals, to take care of themselves in all respects. And I would then open the door and wait for the bell, and shake their hands and say 'God bless you' as they left, and give them eye contact.

For her students, this was the point at which they effectively left school, even though they would return to take their exams, and possibly for post-16 education. It is a key moment in life, acknowledged as such by the way that the interviewee handled it, and also acknowledged as a point at which she could convey to them their worth in God's eyes, through both her words and her eye contact, and in the blessing that she gave them.

She also told a story about an incident involving sacramental forgiveness:

... my department was a string of English classrooms along the thin corridor which was the main access to the PE department. And I developed a really good relationship with PE staff, particularly the blokes, who just thought I was off another, from another planet. And, to me, they were as well, but we met in the middle somewhere in space, and teased each other very happily. And they played a lot of practical jokes on me, but I used words to get my own back. But there was one man who had had a bit of time off, and they'd lost a baby – he and his wife – and one break time, loads of kids milling about, and he just came to ... he was inside one of my English classrooms, and I was in the

corridor and he came to the doorway and started to talk to me. And it was evident from the start this wasn't one of our jokey conversations, but he obviously felt he could trust me as a person and as a priest. And he told me that he and his wife had had an abortion, because something had gone wrong with the baby. I think – I think I remember this correctly, it was going to be Down's Syndrome and they didn't feel that they were equipped to bring up such a child.

He was obviously struggling with this, he was guilty and he had tears in his eyes, and he ... The way the conversation went, in the end, I can honestly say it was an absolution, but not in the form that any priest would identify.

<No purple stole?>

No, and anyway I'm not high church, and I wouldn't know how to give a formal absolution. But I told him that he and his wife – because he was speaking for both of them, really, I said, 'I don't judge you, you shouldn't judge yourselves, but you do need to forgive yourselves, it appears to me'. And, at that point, he just threw his arms around me and buried his face in my neck for a little while, kids still milling about us. And it was just a moment out of time, and it was a precious moment, and a very exhausting moment. I can honestly say that ministering for an hour is a lot more tiring than teaching a full timetable for a day.

<Because?>

It takes – because teaching comes from the heart and the mind ... and sometimes the soul ... but ministering is connecting with the whole spiritual world and it enters a different plane, and it's to do with eternity.

What the PSW provided for her colleague in that moment had nothing to do with his faith, or lack of it, but everything to do with her providing a place in which he could begin the process of healing from the traumatic effects of aborting a wanted baby. In the encounter, God could create through her a place of absolution and healing. Her being there, being who she was, became sacramental presence for that PE teacher, which she described as "to do with eternity". For me, this is a perfect illustration of Fiddes' (2000, p. 215) claim that when "pastors speak the words, 'You are forgiven, go in peace', they are participating in the rhythm of God's forgiveness ... making incarnate in their own flesh and blood the forgiving offer of God" (this is discussed in section 6.4).

"I think we do finally stand with Christ, and not in the place of Christ, in his and our facing of the world": this is sacramental presence, because, as discussed in section 6.3, it mediates God's love, enabling it to be experienced, whether or not the recipient

recognises it as God's love. The vocation of the PSW is to be a public believer, given authority by the church to act in its name, and to be a sacramental presence, someone in whom Christ abides because they abide in Christ.



## 11 Conclusion

I started this research because of the tension I personally experienced in holding together my new-found vocation to be a priest in the church of Christ, and my pre-existing vocation as a teacher and educator. I wanted to understand the nature of this vocation which embraces both ministry in the C of E and engagement in secular work, both for my own personal satisfaction, but also in order to be able to say to the C of E: this is who we are, this is why we matter. We are people who, by virtue of our

ordination, have nailed our colours to the church's mast, and more specifically to that of the C of E. We are also people who interpret God's call on our lives to mean that we work out our vocation as much through our secular work as in the church: on the one hand, our secular work matters to us as part of our call to serve God in God's world, and on the other, in being who we are in our given context, we embody God's presence in that place.

In chapter 1, I introduced the context of this research. The methodology in which I chose to situate it is that of phenomenology (chapter 2), with the research method and detail of the data and analysis in chapters 3 and 4 respectively. Although phenomenology is meant to result in a description of 'the thing itself', that is not possible when discussing a group identity. There is no such thing as 'the PSW' pure and simple: there are PSWs who share certain characteristics, while differing in other ways. At the end of 2017, there were some 3,060 SSMs in parochial ministry in the C of E, of whom an unknown subset were PSWs. My research reflects the views of 28 PSWs (including myself), so while I cannot assume that they are representative of the mass of PSWs, I have no reason to suppose that they are not. At the very least, the analysis presented in this thesis, resulting from an exploratory small-scale doctoral research project, provides a snapshot of what certain PSWs thought about themselves and their vocation at the time.

Chapter 5 is intended to act as a hinge between the more technical material of the earlier chapters, and the theological literature (chapter 6) and interpretation of the data in its light (chapters 7 to 10). In chapter 5, discussing the process I have followed as curation, I acknowledged that I have not followed my chosen method of IPA exactly as it is laid out in the protocols of its originators, Smith and Osborn (2007, 2015). Those protocols suggest an initial level of analysis in which a case study on

### Glossary

C of E	Church of England
CIG	Co-operative inquiry group
FTS	Full-time stipendiary (priest)
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
PSW	Priest in secular work
SSM	Self-supporting minister/ministry

each participant is presented, followed by a second level of analysis in which patterns are discerned across cases. To preserve the anonymity of my participants as far as possible, I have instead presented four composite PSW narratives, based on four questions which the CIG considered significant as the first level of the analysis (chapter 7). The second level of analysis used a framework of three questions from John 1. The two levels of interpretation explore facets of the self-understanding and vocation of the PSW in relation to the literature discussed in chapter 6, so grounding my conclusions in appropriate theological and ecclesial traditions.

The four narratives and three theological discussions presented in this thesis have validity in being honestly and rigorously based on the research data. In providing autobiographical sections, I have tried to ensure that my reasons for choosing excerpts, and situating them as I have done, are transparent. The interpretation and discussion of the research findings is therefore interconnected with my reflections on my own experience.

## **11.1 Contribution to knowledge**

In section 1.1, I described the celebration of self-supporting ministry which took place in Southwark Cathedral on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Southwark Ordination Course, which was the first course designed to train ordinands who wished or needed to remain in secular employment at least until ordination. The SSM representatives who attended described the blessings they experienced through being SSM and the problems they encountered. The participants in my research concurred with their comments about the richness of their experience, the opportunities to engage with people outside the boundaries of the institutional church, and their sense of freedom from some at least of the institutional limitations placed upon FTSs, as examples of what they said in their interviews, quoted in the text of this thesis, confirm. They also felt that their gifts are not used to the full by the church, feeling that the church tries to squeeze them into the shape of a parochial minister and ignores what is not within its immediate scope.

In chapter 7, I presented four composite narratives which typify those SSMs who not only engage in secular employment, but see their work and their working lives as part of their priestly vocation, to whom I have given the label PSW, priest in secular work. The first narrative, whose starting point was the question 'what does it mean to be a priest in the secular?', explored the relationship between the PSW and God, interpreting it as a question about vocation. The second narrative, answering the question 'does it make a difference to how we do our jobs?' is about the relationship between the PSW and their secular work. The third narrative, focused on the

question ‘how does this proclaim Christ to the world?’ describes the relationship between the PSW and the wider world. The fourth narrative, considering ‘what is the role of the PSW in the life of the church?’ concerns the relationship between the PSW and the institutional church. The four questions arose in the CIG and in the interviews because answering them is something the participants found mattered to them as they sought to work out what their vocation required of them in both their secular work context and in the church.

On the one hand, for each participant their context is a particular workplace with a given set of colleagues, and a particular parish or group of parishes to which they are licensed; on the other hand, participants used the particularities of their own context to articulate their sense of being part of something much bigger. In the three chapters that followed (8 to 10), I used three questions from John 1 to interpret what that ‘sense of being part of something much bigger’ might mean. The focus in chapter 8 (‘who are you?’) was on identity, specifically priestly identity. A question often asked of PSWs is why they felt they needed to be ordained, if they were not going to be FTSs, which was generally answered in terms of God’s call on their lives: whether it was comprehensible to the questioner or not, this was what God wanted. Chapter 9 (‘what do you seek?’) considered the desire which leads us into new experiences and new places, and which can result in a sense of restlessness, endemic in ‘Babylon’, which is answered by participating in God at work in our world. Human work matters because it contributes to God’s constant redemption of the created world: it is part of the eschatological new creation (the new Jerusalem) and thus is part of the *missio Dei*. The PSWs in my research all felt that their presence in their secular workplaces was in some sense a sacramental presence, and so chapter 10 (‘where are you staying?’) discussed what that meant to them, and how it is part of the PSW vocation to be on the edge of the church, and to live with the tension and ambiguity that is inherent in such places.

From the evidence and interpretation provided in chapters 7 to 10, I conclude that the key concepts for understanding the unique vocation of those of us who are C of E priests, engaged in secular work, are our identity as priests, the importance of our secular work as part of how we serve God, and our sense that we embody sacramental presence. In section 1.3, I charted my progress through potential research questions, and alongside that, my choice of label and acronym for us. Late in the research process, I decided to word my research question as:

How do people who are simultaneously ordained, licensed, priests in the C of E and engaged in secular work make sense of their particular vocation?

In deciding that, I also realised that the label for us which best sums up our sense of who we are is 'priest in secular work', with the acronym PSW.

## 11.2 Contribution to practice

In section 1.1, I described milestones through the 20<sup>th</sup> century that contributed to the journey from priests being forbidden to engage in secular work to it being recognised as a viable form of vocation in the C of E. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Morgan's (2011) research showed how much had changed, and how much had not. She charted progress in the selection and training of those who did not see their vocation as FTSs, but concluded that there was still considerable progress needed if the church is to take seriously other models of priesthood. In 2013, the Southwark event was billed as a celebration of SSM, but its absence from the C of E website only five years later, suggests that this was not seen as something that needed a permanent place.

Since then, however, a group of SSM officers from dioceses in East Anglia, have started to meet on a more-or-less annual basis, called into being by me in 2016. After the second such meeting, I wrote a report published in *The Church Times* (Gage, 2018) which, among other things, called for a bishop to represent SSMs: it appears that is about to happen. In 2017, a similar group in the west invited all SSM officers to the first national meeting. One of the people calling the national group into being published a book about SSMs (Lees, 2018), which was reviewed in *The Church Times*, where it was described as providing "essential reading" through setting out the demands of a calling to the 'margins' (King, 2018). A second national meeting for SSMs took place at the end of February 2019, to which I contributed using this research. At this meeting, a PSW expressed his "desperation", given the lack of progress since the 1970s in how the church understands us, that this time we find ways to change things.

My work will continue to contribute to this on-going story, providing an analysis of what is special about the PSW vocation – that it is not simply non-stipendiary or self-supporting, but that it celebrates the importance of human work, and demonstrates that God is present in, and working in, all of God's world, including the world of secular work; that the new Jerusalem is already present. It is my intention to write up this story in the form of a book, and also to continue to contribute to national and local events which help us to say to the church: this is who we are, and this is why we matter. It is also my hope that, given that this is an exploratory, small-scale research project, that a bigger project might be undertaken before too long which will test the robustness of the conclusions of this project.



### 11.3 Final thoughts

The PSW is called to be someone through whom God can act, fulfilling the priestly task of offering to God the joy, the ordinary and the mess that they encounter in the workplace and through their work, expressed so well by the interviewee who said:

I'm ordained because that's what I felt called to be. It is ontological for me; it's not about status in the community or status in the congregation. It's, I suppose, reduce it to the sacrament of offering up daily life for myself and for others, in the eucharist – not always at an altar – but in, so to speak, eucharistic moments when the everyday, the quotidian becomes sacred. So that's always been at the heart of my theology of priesthood,

Understanding this as God's call on their lives gives PSWs a sense of fulfilment and joy:

I hope somehow or other it came over ... I mean, I do feel I do get a lot of fulfilment and a great deal of joy from doing what I do, and I don't know whether that comes across quite as strongly as I would like it to. I realised after I talked to you and you went away, and I was thinking about it later in the evening and I thought, yes, I really do ... this is really important, it is really ... I get a great deal out of doing this, and I enjoy doing it.

Each of us is one person, occupying a small part of the world for a finite period of time, but:

I have an image of myself about one of the gifts of God, if one is a believer, which is that he [*sic*] requires us to write our lives across the sky. By which I think I mean that why or what we do may be of little worth in some ways, and we shouldn't insist that it's different from that. Nevertheless, it's as though it is of huge worth, if you see what I mean?

I have found great riches in my data, demonstrated by these three excerpts. In reflecting on them, I am reminded of a passage from Teilhard de Chardin,<sup>43</sup> which has resonated for me since I first read it many years ago:

Since once again, Lord – though not this time in the forests of the Aisne but in the steppes of Asia – I have neither bread, nor wine, nor altar, I will raise myself beyond these symbols, up to the pure majesty of the real itself; I, your priest,

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<sup>43</sup> He wrote at least two versions of this section, in 1918 and again in 1923.

will make the whole earth my altar and on it will offer you all the labours and sufferings of the world.

...

My paten and my chalice are the depths of a soul laid widely open to all the forces which in a moment will rise up from every corner of the earth and converge upon the Spirit. Grant me the remembrance and the mystic presence of all those whom the light is now awakening to the new day. (Teilhard de Chardin's *Mass on the World*, in King, 2005, p. 145)

The PSW offers to God all that they find in their workplaces and in their encounters in the world, secular and sacred. Being called to be a PSW is demanding and yet a great privilege. As Gerard Manley Hopkins' put it in his poem 'As Kingfishers Catch Fire'<sup>44</sup>:

... *myself* it speaks and spells,  
Crying *Whát I dó is me: for that I came.*

...

Christ — for Christ plays in ten thousand places,  
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his  
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

Early in this research, I asked myself 'who am I?', 'what am I for?'. We considered these questions in the CIG, and they informed the interviews. The answer is that we are PSWs, not simply non-stipendiary or self-supporting priests, but priests in secular work, and this is our vocation: to be bridges, to hold the tension, to live on thresholds and in ambiguity, seeking out God in God's world and in God's people as we do our work to God's glory, making God explicit wherever we go. We seek Christ in "ten thousand places", and for this we are here.

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<sup>44</sup> Gerard Manley Hopkins, copied from <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44389/as-kingfishers-catch-fire>, accessed 31 October 2018, original italics.

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## **Appendix 1 Online Questionnaire**

### **Minister/Priest in secular employment**

\*Required

#### ***Introduction***

Dear colleague

The default model of ministry in the Church of England is that of the full-time stipendiary priest, serving in one or more parishes. For some of us, however, this model fails to take into account the distinctive ministry we offer through our involvement in secular work.

I am engaged in research for a professional doctorate on what it means to be a minister/priest in secular employment. When my doctorate is complete, I hope to use this research to contribute to discussion on what priestly ministry might look like for the 21st century church, in which those of us in secular employment are seen as a valid model of priestly ministry, with our contribution not only welcomed and celebrated, but also seen as normative alongside the full-time stipendiary parish priest.

In this phase of my research, I wish to gather stories (anonymously) from those of us who feel that the label of either minister in secular employment (MSE) or priest in secular employment (PSE) applies to us now, or has applied to us in the past. Employment does not need to be paid, nor does it need to be full-time or current. If at some point you have been in ordained ministry in the Church of England alongside significant other work, then you qualify.

#### ***About me***

#### ***About this research***

The first stage is to complete and submit this form. It can be entirely anonymous, depending on the information you give about yourself – questions which might identify you all have an option not to answer.

The second stage is an interview process – there are more details about this towards the end of this form, where you will be asked to provide contact details if you wish to participate further. However, you may simply submit the form with no follow-up required.

***You and your context***

1. What is your age? \*

20-29

30-39

40-49

50-59

60-69

70 or over

Prefer not to say

2. What is your gender? \*

Female

Male

Prefer not to say

3. When were you ordained priest? \*

2010 or later

2000 - 2009

1990 - 1999

1980 - 1989

1970 - 1979

Before 1970

Prefer not to say

4. Describe briefly your experience as MSE/PSE. Please include whether this is current or past experience (indicate how long ago and over what period of time), the context of your ministry(ies) including any licensed ministry, the context of your secular work, and the rough proportions of time spent in secular work and in ministry, as far as these can be separated. \*

.....

5. What are the greatest joys for you in being an MSE/PSW? \*

.....

6. What are the downsides or areas of tension? \*

.....

7. Please describe (as briefly or in as much detail as you wish) a key event or (part) day which encapsulates you as an MSE/PSE. If you prefer, you could email me an audio diary (email address provided). If you agree to participate in the interview process, there will be an opportunity to talk about this in more depth. \*

.....

8. What does a day off look like for you? \*

.....

### ***The interview stage***

This will comprise:

- if appropriate, a morning (or other similar period) in which I accompany you as you go about your daily life, including if possible a shared meal (at my expense), so that I can get a fuller sense of you and your context
- an interview lasting between 60 and 90 minutes, in which together we reflect on the story you gave on this form, and on the morning
- subsequent reflection on an I-narrative from the interview (this is a transcript of all the sentences/clauses beginning with 'I')
- a second interview of not more than 60 minutes, in which we discuss your reactions to the I-narrative and to the whole process plus any further reflection.

I know it's difficult to find time in already busy schedules, but I hope that participants will find the process not only interesting, but also helpful in providing a structure for reflecting on what it means to be an MSE/PSE, and that it will be an enriching experience.

If you are willing to take part in the interview process, please give your name, email address, and a contact phone number and address in the box below. Please don't not do this simply because you think you might be too far away or because your experience isn't current – I hope to be able to choose people on the basis of balancing age, gender and the nature of their experience as an MSE/PSE.



## Appendix 2 My personal responses to the questionnaire

The demographic analysis in section 3.1 includes my responses to the first three questions in the questionnaire, about my age, gender and date of ordination as a priest.

### *Question 4*

Describe briefly your experience as MSE/PSE. Please include whether this is current or past experience (indicate how long ago and over what period of time), the context of your ministry(ies) including any licensed ministry, the context of your secular work, and the rough proportions of time spent in secular work and in ministry, as far as these can be separated.

When I was ordained, I was a maths educator. In 2013, I took early retirement from paid employment, having dropped from full-time to four and then three days a week over the previous five years. Since 2013, the proportion of my time spent on maths education has decreased from being quite significant to almost nothing, while the proportion of my time spent on research and writing has increased. Despite 'retirement', in the past few months I have been engaged on average in parish and other ministry for about 55-60% of a working week of about 35 hours, and a little over 40% on research-related work.

### *Question 5*

What are the greatest joys for you in being an MSE/PSE?

I generally find it difficult to prioritise any form of work in my study (including ministerial 'desk' work), tending rather to favour parish activity. In part that comes from demands made on me by others, but it is also my own inclination: one of the joys for me in being a PSW is the opportunity to be involved with other people not only in ordinary daily activity but also at significant points in their lives. It is an enormous privilege to be invited into a family home when someone is dying or has just died, to be with and pray with the bereaved family at such a time, and then to help them take their leave of someone they love through funeral ministry. Doing this as well as possible is a source of fulfilment to me. It is also a great joy to be part of events such as weddings and christenings, helping people to celebrate and to express their hopes through liturgy, scripture and my own words. I am not a natural extrovert, however, and periods of quiet in my study – reading, reflecting, writing – are a necessary support for the more

active aspects of ministry. Putting together ministry with research and writing has proved a very beneficial and productive way of working for me.

I also experience great joy in using my God-given talents to the best of my abilities. There were aspects of the work I did as an educator in creating resources for other people which felt truly fulfilling, giving me a sense that I was working 'with the grain of the universe', as does writing when it is going well. I feel that I am working with God in a task for which God has fitted me by giving me certain talents and enabling me to find opportunities to develop them. It is the same feeling I get when I stand behind the altar, leading worship with God's people.

### *Question 6*

What are the downsides or areas of tension?

At first, coming to terms with being a PSW was a source of tension. I felt deskilled in my new role and was thankful that my secular work, which at that point occupied four days a week, enabled me to feel that I still knew myself and that I could still operate at the level of competency that I expected. I was part of a small support group which met every few weeks to reflect on our lives as PSWs, which enabled me to see that this was not simply a personal issue. Reading Hodge's report in 2009 {Hodge, 1983, #17649}, lodged thoughts about holding the tension between parish ministry and secular work in my mind, and over time these thoughts became more and more insistent that they were not simply to be registered, but needed to be explored in depth.

Between 2006 and 2015, I also visited South Africa once or occasionally twice a year, usually for about three weeks, to teach on maths courses for South African teachers. One of my colleagues in my secular work had started a not-for-profit organisation to help South African teachers acquire knowledge and skills which had been denied to black and coloured people during the Apartheid years. In 2014, I went out for four weeks to work on a new scheme of work in probability and statistics with the full-time African members of the organisation. It was easy to see this work as part of my vocation as a PSW; what was harder was realising that, by the end of 2015, I needed to step back. At that point, I was engaged in writing a book for teachers about the method of teaching probability and statistics which I had pioneered with a UK colleague, but although we worked hard on making it transferable to developing education systems, in the end, I felt it was a step too far for them. Once the book was published, and an online course developed, I could see my opportunities to take the work forward diminishing without considerable time spent on marketing myself. I still feel that being a teacher is part of who I am: the joy I gained from finding ways to help people grasp difficult concepts was an important part of why I did not give up in my

early years as a teacher, when it was very hard going at times. However, I gradually recognised that this work was at an end.

Latterly, I think that the greatest tension I feel in being a PSW is in my parish role. I am an associate priest in a group of four rural parishes, which are close to a cathedral city. We lose people because we cannot compete with all that the cathedral can offer. Like much of the C of E, we are also losing people because of demographic changes, and because of changes in what people choose to do on Sundays. Some of the people who are left are grateful for what our ministry team can offer, others are not, and working with them can be challenging, even unpleasant at times. I am also unhappy with current policy in the C of E, which appears to me to be focused on institutional survival. These factors are creating pressure in me to leave the parishes and licensed ministry, and to go back to the social justice work which I was doing when I experienced the call to ordained ministry back in 2006. I am waiting for God to agree with me!

### *Question 7*

Please describe (as briefly or in as much detail as you wish) a key event or (part) day which encapsulates you as an MSE/PSW. If you prefer, you could email me an audio diary (email address given). If you agree to participate in the interview process, there will be an opportunity to talk about this in more depth.

Thinking about a key event or (part) day which encapsulates me as a PSW, one incident which comes to mind is a funeral visit which took place in my office in a university department building. I remember going to the cloakroom to change into my clerical collar before the two family members arrived, and then taking it off again afterwards. I did a second visit to this particular family in the home in which the deceased had lived, but her son was unable to be present then, which was why I had met him and his daughter in my office. What defines this as a PSW moment is the putting on and taking off of my collar: I was aware that I was uncomfortable in my collar in that setting, hoping both that my colleagues would not see me in it, and at the same time almost wishing they would so that I could be that person in their eyes.

A less uncomfortable experience is the research work I have done on behalf of the diocese, including a survey on well-being of all clergy in the diocese, and a survey of SSMs in the diocese to collect data to help inform senior staff on who we are, and what else we do. These both involved online questionnaires which needed quantitative and qualitative analysis, with results presented in a form which senior staff could rapidly grasp, and which could be presented to groups such as Bishop's Council and the Council for Ministry. This work required technical knowledge, gained from my secular

work both as a maths educator and as a researcher, on creating surveys and analysing the data collected. I was pleased to be able to contribute this expertise to my clerical colleagues – and, if I am honest, also pleased to be able to demonstrate some of my secular skills to them.

Perhaps the times which get closest to the heart of what it means to me to be a PSW, however, are those occasions when a secular colleague has indicated that in some way I have helped them to carry a burden, or that my presence has helped them to do what they needed to do. I am reminded of three such incidents, one before ordination was on the horizon, one when I was in training, and one after ordination. In the first and third instances, the people concerned told me that they had been very anxious about having to attend in one case a summer school and in the other a Christmas lunch, but that my presence meant they knew they would be safe, and so would be able to cope. To me, this exemplifies sacramental presence: it was not I who made the difference of myself, but God acting in and through me. In the other instance, a colleague needed to unburden herself about a self-harming behaviour she was finding it difficult to stop. Being able to tell someone in confidence, sharing in prayer at the time, and knowing that she was prayed for thereafter, all made a difference. I interpret such events as ways of being priestly in the secular work setting. None of them required me to be ordained in order to do what I did, of course, and the question as to why I, or any other PSW, might need to be ordained is one that I address in Chapter 8.

### *Question 8*

What does a day off look like for you?

I find the question about what a day off looks like for me as difficult to answer as all my other respondents did! A day in my study on my research is a day off from parish ministry; conversely a day in the parishes, starting perhaps with Tea 'n' Toast (a drop-in breakfast and chat session), followed by a visit to a school for a prayer walk, followed by a lunchtime meeting and then a pastoral visit, and then perhaps a prayer meeting or business meeting in the evening, is a day when research thinking can continue at the back of my mind. Time off from both might be spent going to see family, or singing in the adult voluntary choir at the cathedral. There are few days when I do not engage in some form of work at some point, however, since although Saturdays are technically my day off, sermons generally require last minute revision at the very least.



## **Appendix 3 Participant Information Form**

### **The minister/priest in secular employment research project February 2017**

#### **Information for interview participants**

##### ***Section A: The Research Project***

###### *Title of project*

Exploring the distinctive contribution to the theology of priesthood of ministers/priests in secular employment (M/PSWs).

###### *Brief summary of research*

I am both practitioner and researcher, as I am an M/PSW myself. From my own experience, and as Bishop's Officer for Self-Supporting Ministry in the Diocese of Ely, I am aware of a mismatch between words of appreciation for what we are perceived to contribute to the church, and understanding of what it is that we actually contribute.

The purpose of this research is therefore to explore what we believe we contribute and how we interpret our experience of being M/PSWs, in order to contribute to the theology of priestly ministry.

###### *Purpose of the study*

The study forms a significant part of my Professional Doctorate.

###### *Name of your Supervisors*

Names and university affiliation provided.

###### *Why have you been asked to participate?*

Because you are, or have been, a minister/priest in secular employment, and as part of your response to my online questionnaire, you have given me your contact details.

In the first phase of my research, I recruited a co-operative inquiry group (CIG) from among my fellow M/PSWs in my own diocese. We met four times over a 3 month period in 2016, constructing data from our own lived experience, as we reflected upon it.

Following this initial data gathering phase and the online questionnaire you completed in November/December 2016, I am now inviting you into a process which will enable us

to reflect together at depth on your experience and understanding of what it means to be a minister/priest in secular employment. The process will consist of:

1. **if appropriate**, a part of a day in which I shadow you in your secular work (I recognise that this may not be possible)
  - a. **if this would be inappropriate**, then I would welcome an opportunity to talk about your secular work before the interview proper, to give me a better understanding of this context
2. a shared meal (at my expense)
3. a recorded unstructured interview of about 60-90 minutes in which we reflect on your experience of ministry, your online submission, and anything that has emerged during our time together
4. reflection on an I-narrative (all clauses from the interview which begin with the pronoun 'I ...') which I will forward to you within a week of the interview
5. a further recorded interview of about 45-60 minutes in which we reflect on the I-narrative and the whole process.

*How many people are being asked to participate?*

From those providing contact information through the online questionnaire, I have a short-list of up to 10 potential interviewees. I would like at least 5 complete interviews ultimately, covering a range of demographic factors.

*What are the likely benefits of taking part?*

There will be no direct benefit to you in taking part, other than the opportunity to reflect at depth on your self-understanding and on your context. The benefit will be in contributing to research which could help the Church of England in better understanding the distinctive contribution which M/PSWs make to the church.

It is possible that the process will uncover difficult material. If this happens, you may well have someone you can talk it through with already, but if not, or if you prefer to talk with someone else, Rev'd AB, who is an experienced Spiritual Director, is willing to be contacted (*contact details provided*).

*Can I refuse to take part?*

Of course! If you do not wish to take part, you need do nothing further.

If you initially decide to be interviewed, and at any point decide either not to continue with the process, or that you would prefer your data not to be used, that is your absolute right, and I will immediately delete all information I have from you.

*Has the study got ethical approval?*

The study has ethical approval from an ethics committee at Anglia Ruskin University.

*Has the organisation where you are carrying out the research given permission?*

The Bishop of Ely has been informed about this study, and has given his permission for me to contact fellow priests in the Diocese of Ely to ask them if they would be prepared to participate. If you are not from the Diocese of Ely, and would like me to inform your Bishop of this study before participating, please let me know.

*What will happen to the results of the study?*

The research will be published in a thesis for a Professional Doctorate. It will also inform reports to the Council for Ministry in the Diocese of Ely, where I am the Bishop's Advisor for Self-Supporting Ministry.

I hope that in due course, it will also provide the basis for a book about the distinctive vocation of the minister/priest in secular employment.

*Contact for further information*

Rev'd Dr Jenny Gage (contact details provided)



## Appendix 4 Participant Consent Form

### The minister/priest in secular employment research project

#### Consent form for interview participants

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:

**Title of the project:**

Exploring the distinctive contribution to the theology of priesthood of ministers/priests in secular employment (M/PSWs).

**Investigator contact details:**

Rev'd Dr Jenny Gage (contact details provided)

1. I agree to take part in the above research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet for Interview participants.
2. I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.
3. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions so far have been answered to my satisfaction.
4. I understand that I am free to choose not to be interviewed, or if I am, for my data not to be used subsequently.
5. I understand what will happen to the data collected from me for the research.
6. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Interview Participant Information Sheet.
7. I understand that the interviews will be recorded.
8. I understand that quotes from me may be used in the dissemination of the research, but that they will be used in a way which minimises the risk of identifying me. However I do understand that this risk exists.

Data Protection: I agree to the University<sup>45</sup> processing personal data which I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me.

Name of participant (print) .....

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<sup>45</sup> "The University" includes Anglia Ruskin University and its Associate Colleges.

Signed .....

Date .....

PARTICIPANTS MUST BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP

## Appendix 5 Interview analysis

### Participant 1

Superordinate theme	Theme	What this theme is about
PSW vocation	Why be ordained?	God wanted me to be ordained in the context in which I was working
	PSW vocation	God in the mass on Sunday, God in the mess on Monday
	Worker priests	They force me to look at who I am and what I'm doing
	Being priestly at work	... and they come to you
	Prophetic ministry	We are ... prophetic to the church
	Paid to be a manager	Rewarded ... or sacked ... as one of those
	Thinking theologically about daily life	Enables me to think theologically about things that come up in daily life
	Chaplain not the same as a PSW	Chaplain comes in and goes away
	Dirty hands	Nothing ... kind or affirming about being made redundant
	Paid to be a priest	Never ever paid to be a priest
	Priest all the time	I'm doing one thing in a number of different contexts
	Active life still important	You've just got to stay stuck in here
Work matters	Work matters	You have to do a decent job of whatever it is you're being paid for
	Earning respect	There is no respect for the collar in itself
Aware of God in all of life	Integration of sacred and secular	Being an MSE is about ... trying to get rid of those boxes
	Christian virtues exist without being labelled as such	I don't want to put labels on them
	Secular work also part of Christian service	Valuing what everybody does
	Bringing secular into church and into prayer	Dual carriageway
	Praying for people at work	Most of the things people do never get prayed for
	To the glory of God	Doing it for the glory of God
Fulfilment and joy	Fulfilment	I just love what I do
	Realising full potential	the opportunity to bring some more of them [skills and talents] into play
Building the kingdom	Building the kingdom is political	Politics is ... exactly where Christians should be

<b>Superordinate theme</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>What this theme is about</b>
	Congregation looking deeper	It might mean that there'd be a little less for you
	Building the kingdom	Important that people in their working lives feel they are building the kingdom
Church/secular interface	Translating between religious and secular registers	Once upon a time there was a man called Jonah ...
	Church doesn't understand/value the world	Secular colleagues have always found it ... easier to ...
Perception of PSW	Perception of SSM	It's not quite what they think

### *Participant 2*

<b>Superordinate theme</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>What this theme is about</b>
PSW vocation	PSW vocation	Being church their way, standing on the threshold with you head swivelling both ways
	Priest at work	God bless you' as they left
	New call unfolding	I want to use this limbo to good effect
	Vocation to be a priest	I don't call myself a minister, I call myself a priest
	Always a priest	I am a priest in whatever I do
	Costly presence	There was a personal cost
Perception of PSW	Support	Total incomprehension of what it's like
	Diocesan support in secular work	Hands off!
Church/secular interface	Labour party	I thought the Labour Party was there to support the weak and vulnerable
Why be ordained?	Why be ordained?	Called and ordained for a purpose
Work matters	Work matters	I'm in the Merchant Navy now because of you
Holding the tension	Recognition of PSW vocation	They're stipendiary, they don't get it
	Recognition of PSW leadership skills	MSEs with all those leadership qualities, but not regarded
Building the kingdom	Sharing faith	Through relationships ... slow and long and gentle
	Nature of call to ministry	From Isaiah 61
	Priesthood	Ministering ... is to do with eternity



<b>Superordinate theme</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>What this theme is about</b>
Theology of priesthood	Being a priest means having the authority of the Trinity	I had God, the Trinity behind me and within me
Fulfilment and joy	Fulfilment	I just felt filled with joy
Parish ministry	Parish ministry	I've become more involved in parish ministry

### *Participant 3*

<b>Superordinate theme</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>What this theme is about</b>
PSW vocation	Dirty hands	We can't be so precious
	Impact of faith	Does your faith matter to you in your place of work?
	Personal cost of ministry	It was costly at the time
	PSW vocation	I've always had to work out where God is
	Types of PSW	Two ... no, there are three sorts of MSE
Aware of God in all of life	Aware of God in all of life	Religion is secular as well as religious
	God in the secular	Divine revelation in the concern of one person
	God making himself known	God expresses himself in the world ... not only through those who are aware of him
	Making God explicit	To make God explicit can be an action, some form of pointing, even a hovering, holding God in mind
Theology of priesthood	Difference between PSW and FTS	Attention forced to God in the secular ... has to be a major theological focus [for the PSW].
	Theology of priesthood	[PSW] reflects a whole theological pattern for thinking about God
Why be ordained?	God's call	I think it's being called that matters
Work matters	Work issues	Being judged as a moral being, rather than in terms of raw achievement
	Work matters	Maybe a building site is a good place to spend time, but you have to discover why
Holding the tension	Holding the tension	Become a parish priest to cure the problem

<b>Superordinate theme</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>What this theme is about</b>
	Recognition of PSW	Why would we need a PSW? What do we expect from them?
Church/secular interface	Future of the church	The Church of England organisationally exists on people who are stipendiary ... or a sort of stipendiary pattern
Parish ministry	Parish ministry	Being committed to the ... parish way of life, which is quite distinctive
Perception of PSW	Perception of PSW	The nice bits of parish life, not the rest that I have to put up with
Identity	Doing and being	Two sides of the same coin

#### *Participant 4*

<b>Superordinate theme</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>What this theme is about</b>
PSW vocation	Being priestly at work	This is how priesthood is connected
	Impact of priesthood on secular job	Does it affect the way I do my job here?
	PSW vocation	Do I feel I'm being useful, and do I feel valued in return?
	Types of PSW	You must have a hide like a fucking rhino!
Future of the church	Future of the church	I despair if anything of my own tradition ... I think it's become demoralised and has reverted to adolescence.
Theology of priesthood	Difference between FTS and PSW	Being a priest 24/7 ... doesn't focus the job
	Leadership	Leadership emerges from discipleship
	Theology of priesthood	Model of priesthood held collectively
Holding the tension	Between Pentecost and the Parousia	Living in that ambiguity that's at the heart of what living as a Christian is about
	Secular work issues	If I got confirmed I would have to take seriously the ethics of what I do ... Monday to Friday
Church/secular interface	Language – theological and secular	If you can talk the Creole ... you can be understood
	Parish	Ambiguity about whether people were doing it as the church or the community
	Speaking for Christians	How religious people think, rather than what people think religious people think.
Identity	Wearing the collar	Occasionally he wants me ... visibly on his team

Superordinate theme	Themes	What this theme is about
	Identity	It goes right through your backbone like Blackpool goes through rock
Work matters	Christians at work	Equipping the laity for their lives as Christians at work
	Work matters	You are my best bureaucrat
Building the kingdom	Missio Dei	There's a whole way of looking at life if you factor in ... the God of Jesus Christ
Why be ordained?	Why be ordained?	I'm ordained because that's what I felt called to be

*Participant 5*

Superordinate theme	Themes	What this theme is about
PSW vocation	Accommodating SSMs	I had to leave an assembly ... dash off to get there
	Being church	being seen as ... the church throughout the week
	Being ordained	can't imagine not being ordained now ... ought to lead to higher levels of discipleship
	Being priestly at work	about the blessing
	Perception of SSMs	huge perception ... that we SSMs are playing at it a bit
	Representing Jesus	acting in the way that Jesus would act
	SSM unfamiliar concept	people didn't know you could do two things
	Blended ministry	one shirt rule
	Flexible boundaries	it's difficult sometimes to see where those boundaries lie
	Priestly identity	we can't hide from our calling
	Public Christian	used to ask what would Jesus do
Church/secular interface	Being relational	being able to empathise with a particular person
	Building bridges	bringing the church into the community
	Church/work interface	two worlds collide
	Future of the church	the church has a different future
	Grounded in real life	add a certain dimension
	Prophetic voice	that prophetic voice

Superordinate theme	Themes	What this theme is about
	Understanding the PSW	little understanding of how we are building the church here
Holding the tension	Family tensions	you're a husband first and a priest second
	Sabbath	no, I can't do that, it's my day off
	Secular work issues	idea of being driven by profit ... made me really uncomfortable
	Tension in doing two jobs	jack of all trades, master of none
Building the kingdom	Missio Dei	play my part in building God's kingdom here on earth
	Social justice	I'm hungry for social justice
Identity	Identity	this is a role I was born to play
	Ontological change	permanent change that is completely irreversible
	PSW identity	being a priest teacher or teacher priest ... is who I am
Work matters	Faith important at work	I really feel fulfilled if I can make students think differently about ... mutual flourishing
	Impact of faith and priestly identity on secular work	need to project a more just and fair element in my teaching
Future of the church	SSM default model	recruitment crisis
Theology of priesthood	Priesthood of all believers	away from ... the priesthood of all believers ... to ... where we are in a distinctively priestly ministry

### *Participant 6*

Superordinate theme	Themes	What this theme is about
PSW vocation	PSW vocation	It's 24/7 for God
	Being prophetic	I'm taken out of my comfort zone, but I know I've got to deliver
Church/secular interface	Gifting	Discernment of people's gifts and actually using them
	Church/world interface	I asked where the centre of the community was
Aware of God in all of life	Aware of God in all of life	Totally open to what God is leading them to do throughout their daily life
Building the kingdom	Focus on God	Knowing I am where God needs me to be
	Sharing faith	I've always shared my faith at work

<b>Superordinate theme</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>What this theme is about</b>
Future of the church	Future of the church	The church spending too long talking about things and not acting on them.
	Parish	To me, parish boundaries don't exist
Holding the tension	Work issues	God, how am I going to cope with this?
	Support	He is ... the listener, which is what I need
Why be ordained?	Why be ordained?	I would have questioned why I needed to be a priest, but ...
Work matters	Work matters	I'm very thorough ... I don't let things go
Identity	Collar = identification	The collar helps people identify that they can talk to me
Fulfilment and joy	Fulfilment	It's like that little bit of the jigsaw has finally clicked into place.
Theology of priesthood	Difference between FTS and PSW	They don't have the skillset to relate to the world around them.



## Appendix 6 CIG analysis

Sessions 1-4 took place between March and May 2016; Session F (final) in September 2017.

Superordinate theme	Themes	CIG session
Relationship with the institutional church	Can the vicar be part-time?	1
	Priesthood and ministry not confined to a part-time space	1
	Unwritten assumption that 'proper ministry' is full-time and we offer a bit	1
	Structural exclusion from eg. team prayers, chapter, office	1
	Lack of recognition of what the PSW brings with them	1
	Day off – does this mean taking time off from the other job?	1
	Not part of the club, about God not the institution	2
	SSMs not considered, doesn't cross people's minds that they might be willing, capable and available	2
	Good for colleagues to see how you are treated in your other life	2
	Being in one community, about accountability	3
	More appreciation of priesthood among secular colleagues, than valuing of work skills in church context	4
	Personal acceptance, but isolation at the institutional level	4
	Part- and half-time working	4
	PSWs not feeling valued	F
	Where does this ministry sit with respect to the church	F
	What is recognition, why does it matter?	F
	Resignation for now, but when there aren't enough FTS left!	F
	More about world view than anything intentional	F
Vocation	Being set apart by God	2
	Being valued in two spheres, well being	4
	What is the gift that the PSW brings, that enriches everyone's priesthood?	4
	Identifying the unique gift without which the wider priesthood and church would be impoverished	4
	What being a priest is about – the gift of God in me	4
	Calling/choosing	F
	Authority from the Trinity not the diocese	F
	Feeling called, but also wanting to bring something unique	F

Superordinate theme	Themes	CIG session
	Time for formation, becomes more ontological over time	F
	Whose choice? Ours or God's?	F
	Portfolio working life, hence the importance of authority from the Trinity, rather than from the church hierarchy	F
	Giving a voice to variety of vocations	F
Work	Professional work has changed how she does ministry	2
	St Paul, tentmaker	3
	Being good at our jobs, doing them well, really matters	3
	Are PSWs more task-driven, than person-driven?	3
	What is sabbath for us?	3
	How does our secular work feed into our sense of ourselves as priests`?	3
	Sabbath issues	4
	Work routines, deadlines	F
	Gifts of the Holy Spirit at work	F
Bridge between church and secular world	How we're viewed by secular colleagues, ordination a barrier?	3
	Ministering in the world, richer	3
	What gifts do we carry from one sphere to the other?	4
	PSW well placed to reflect on integration of faith and life	F
	Framing in terms of bringing in the world, but our lens is priesthood	F



## **Appendix 7 Resources for the Sunday dedicated to Setting God's People Free for ... Monday to Saturday (as well as Sunday!)<sup>46</sup>**

### **Worship Resources for 'Setting God's People Free'**

*Sunday 3 March 2019, First Before Lent*

For a vast range of resources, see <https://www.theologyofwork.org/work-in-worship/hymns-psalms-poems/hymns>

#### ***Suggested readings:***

OT     Genesis 2:4b-9, 15

Psalm 90

NT     Acts 18.1-4

Gospel Matthew 25.14-30

#### ***Before the Service***

It would be beneficial to read all the suggested readings, even if you are only going to use one of them. Note the following verses:

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it." (Gen 2.15)

"Let the favour of the Lord our God be upon us, and prosper for us the work of our hands – O prosper the work of our hands!" (Ps 90.17)

"Paul ... stayed with them, and they worked together ..." (from Acts 18.2-3)

What do these say to you, about the value God puts upon your daily work? You may be in active employment, you may be unemployed or retired, or looking after a family or caring for a friend or relative, or you may be part of the gig economy, not knowing from one week to the next what your working pattern will look like. How about the people in your congregation? How might these verses look to them?

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<sup>46</sup> *Setting God's People Free* is a "programme of change to enable the whole people of God to live out the Good News of Jesus confidently in all of life, Sunday to Saturday", <https://www.churchofengland.org/SGPF> (accessed 20 December 2019).

## ***Homily***

What will you be doing this time tomorrow? Think about it for a moment or two, then turn to someone near you – possible not people you know well – and talk to each other.

What will you be doing this time tomorrow?

Allow a few minutes for people to talk, then if appropriate ask two or three to share their conversation with the whole congregation.

Thank you for that. As for me, I shall be ... [tell them briefly what you'll be doing this time tomorrow]

It's easy to think that our Christian service is about what we do today, here in church. It's easy to think that God cares more about what goes on in church than about what happens the rest of the week. But that isn't true.

Listen to Rita's story. On Sundays, Rita helped on the coffee rota at her local church. She knew she was never going to take an active part in the service itself, but that was fine, she thought, because she could make sure that her refreshments encouraged people to chat with others before going home. She saw that as her service to God.

All the rest of the week, Rita worked in a hairdresser's. She loved her work. She saw when people came in looking tired and burdened, and she took special care to give them time to talk, while she attended to their hair. Some didn't want to talk, they just wanted a bit of peace and quiet, and that was fine by her too.

It made her happy to see people going out with their hair looking smart and freshly styled, but it made her even happier to see them going out with a smile on their faces, with the burden lifted for a while.

What do you think God values most about what Rita does? Serving coffee on a Sunday morning, or the care she gives to her clients Monday to Saturday?

Rita will probably never see herself as a minister, but when she listens to people, or gives them time to be quiet, she is ministering to them, just as surely as any vicar or pastor does.

But maybe you're thinking that's all very well but my work isn't like that.

Let's contrast Rita's story with Colin's.

Colin was a regular church-goer, keen to contribute to church life, so the vicar asked Colin if he'd consider being church-warden. "Hmm", said Colin, "but would that mean I'd have to be confirmed?" "Well, yes," said the vicar, "aren't you? I always thought you must be ...". "No, my parents had me christened when I was a baby, but we weren't really a church-going family, so the opportunity wasn't there." "Well, no problem", responded the vicar, "It'll delay things a bit, but that's all. We can meet to talk it through, and then you can be confirmed at the cathedral the next time there's a service."

"I'll need to think about that" was all that Colin said.

Colin needed to think about it because he worked at a weapons research centre, and he knew that what he did contributed to making weapons that the company sold all round the world. He was in a real dilemma – on the one hand, he would love to be church-warden, and to bring his gifts to the service of the church he had grown to love; on the other hand, his work wasn't really in keeping with his understanding of the gospel. But he couldn't just give up his job – he had a mortgage to pay, a family to support ...

Pause, give people a moment to think about Colin's dilemma

Rita is like the servant in the parable we heard in the gospel reading who was given five talents and traded with them, doubling them to ten. Rita has a talent for doing people's hair, and she doubles her talent by making sure that they go out, not just with their hair looking better, but by helping them to unburden themselves or to find rest from the hassles of life.

But what about Colin? So far, Colin is like the servant who simply buried their talent, but he could be one of the other two. How? Not by giving up his job, but by looking for God in the weapons research centre. For make no mistake, God is at work in a weapons research centre just as surely as he's at work in a hairdresser's. It is going to make Colin uncomfortable, having to work in a place that feels at odds with his faith; it will probably make him even more uncomfortable to be open about his faith, and to tell people that he's thinking about confirmation. But God has never promised to make our lives comfortable!

So what about you? Do you see your service to God as about what you do here on Sunday mornings? Or perhaps at church-based meetings in the week? When you talked about what you'll be doing this time tomorrow, did you think that might be your service to God, the way that you serve him through serving other people? Or are you

in a situation like Colin's, where it feels as if your work is at odds with your faith, and that there are questions you haven't wanted to face up to?

Let's pause again. Think again about what you'll be doing this time tomorrow, but this time, think about where God is at work there, and how you might be helping him.

Give them a little time to think, don't be in too much of a hurry to move on

I'm not going to ask you to talk about this now, but to keep it in mind and think about it during this next week. Just remember: God cares about what we do Monday to Saturday every bit as much as he cares about what we do in church.

Psalm 90 ends with the words "O Lord, prosper the work of our hands!" I think that makes a great prayer for us all – prosper the work of our hands. Whatever it is you'll be doing this time tomorrow, pray that God will prosper your work, and that in it you will be contributing to God's creation.

Whatever you'll be doing this time tomorrow, don't forget – your work matters to God. He needs you to do the work he's given you to do to the best of your ability, so that your five talents become ten, invested for him in his service.

Amen

### ***Suggestions for intercessions***

Loving God, we pray for your church – your body here on earth. Help us to be people who invest our talents through our service to you. Help us also to be people who appreciate all that others do, especially when it is unseen; we give thanks for *[name]* our cleaner<sup>47</sup>, for *[name]* who cleans out the gutters when they need it, for *[name]* who makes sure we have communion wafers and wine, and clean linen.

Lord, in your mercy

#### **Hear our prayer**

Loving God, we pray for your world, the world that you have created with your own hands to be a place of beauty and wonder. Today we pray that we may all see our daily work as part of our service to you, part of playing our part in your creation. We pray especially for all whose work is difficult or dangerous, or who find it difficult to see where you are at work in it. Help us all to look for you working alongside us in our

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<sup>47</sup> Insert names as appropriate, and think about who in your congregation deserves to be included – the ideas here are meant to be suggestions only.

co-workers; help us all to be people through whom others can experience your love and care.

We pray too for all who are unemployed, that they will find ways to keep their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

Loving God, we pray for our community, especially ... [insert people who care for the locality – think about areas that wouldn't normally make it into church intercessions, maybe the people who clean the public toilets, or the street cleaners, or the people who mend the street lights, or make sure the drains are working ...].

We pray too for those in our community who are homeless, those we see on the streets, and the hidden homeless – sleeping on friends' sofas, perhaps, or sharing a too small house between too many people.

Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

Loving God, we pray for all who are sick or struggling with too great a burden. We pray especially for ... *[names of those for whom you are praying specifically]*. Be with them all to comfort them in their need, and to strengthen them for the week to come.

Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

Loving God, we pray for all who are near the end of life, and especially for any who will die today. Be very close to them in these last hours. We pray in particular for ... *[insert names of those who are dying, or who have just died]* and for their families and friends. Be with all who mourn; help them in their grief and loss.

Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

Finally, Lord, we pray for ourselves, that you will go with us tomorrow and in all our days to come. Help us always to know that you are with us, and that you need us to work with you.

O Lord, prosper the work of our hands, prosper the work of our hands.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.**

***Hymns/songs***

Opening hymn:

All people that on earth do dwell  
King of glory, king of peace  
New every morning is the love

After the sermon/offertory:

All that I am, all that I do  
Angel voices ever singing  
Blest are you, Lord of creation  
Father, hear the prayer we offer  
Father, I place into your hands  
Fill thou my life, O Lord my God  
For the fruits of his creation  
Lord of all hopefulness  
Strengthen for service, Lord

For children/all age:

Jesus' hands were kind hands

Final hymn:

All my hope on God is founded  
Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go  
God is working his purpose out  
Let all the world in every corner sing  
Lord, for the years  
Now thank we all our God