

NON STIPENDIARY MINISTRY - A STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY; PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF A DIOCESAN SURVEY

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Diocese of Southwark was the first diocese in the Church of England to ordain deacons and priests who continued in secular paid employment whilst undertaking ministry in a non-stipendiary capacity.

Over the past 30 years the nature of non-stipendiary ministry (NSM) has evolved with the increasing emphasis on ministry in the parish and the development of ordained local ministry (OLM). The original vision of 'worker priests' whose primary focus of ministry was their secular jobs has been lost. In recent years, the OLM scheme has been discontinued in Southwark.

We currently have 185 non-stipendiary clergy licensed in the diocese (Diocesan Directory 2012). These are a diverse group including those who trained under the OLM scheme intending to continue their ministry in their sending church and those who trained under the part time SEITE course who have moved from their sending church for their training curacy and subsequent posts. Additionally, whilst many non stipendiary clergy are in part or full time secular employment, a significant percentage are not employed or have retired from employment. Priests in part time or full time sector ministry are also variably included in the NSM category.

The numbers of vocations to non-stipendiary ministry have fallen significantly in recent years.

In an attempt to understand the vocation and role of different forms of non-stipendiary ministry in Southwark in the 21st century and to plan effectively for identifying, equipping and supporting this ministry in the context of ministry and mission in Southwark Diocese, a survey of non stipendiary clergy was undertaken during 2012.

Since the initial survey was undertaken, the impact of the current national financial situation on the Diocese has become apparent. With a significant fall in the Parish Share collected during 2011, the necessity to reduce the expenditure in the Diocese has become evident. In a recent series of Archdeaconry consultations, Bishop Christopher has identified the loss of 30 stipendiary posts as a necessary way forward unless substantially more income can be raised. The strategic importance of the non stipendiary clergy has therefore become more evident since the completion of the initial survey. It is increasingly essential to determine the potential of the non stipendiary clergy to support and develop the ministry of ordained clergy in Southwark, and it is hoped that this survey's results will facilitate these deliberations at a critical time in the life of the Diocese.

2. METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted using a questionnaire devised by Rev Dr Sue Clarke and Rev Jonathan Croucher with input from Canon Jane Steen.

The input of the Ministry and Training Committee of the Diocese was also obtained and additional questions were added at the request of this Committee. The questionnaire was piloted with a group of non stipendiary training curates during an IME session and their feedback used to modify and clarify certain questions. The questionnaires contain quantitative and qualitative questions.

A letter from Bishop Christopher was sent to all non stipendiary clergy licensed in the Diocese of Southwark presenting the purpose of the survey and encouraging participation. Clergy were invited to complete the survey on line, through an emailed version of the survey or on a hard copy version. Respondents could elect to complete the survey anonymously but all respondents were assured that their answers would be held confidentially and all results would be anonymised. The deadline of May 2012 was set for responses to be made. A reminder email was sent to all NSM clergy prior to the closure date.

A preliminary analysis of both was undertaken and reported to the Diocesan Ministry and Training committee in July 2012. Following this presentation, a further request for responses was made and the cumulative results are now reported.

3. RESULTS

65% of clergy classified in the Southwark Diocesan Directory as 'NSM' replied to the Bishop's letter with 61% of clergy who were not in full time salaried ministry completing and returning the questionnaire (40% before reminder). This response rate is acceptable for an electronic/postal survey.

Demography

112 clergy returned questionnaires and a further 9 sent emails indicating they were in full time salaried ministry as chaplains, wardens and canons. 11 completed their questionnaires anonymously. Of the assessable questionnaires, 54% were from women and 46% men. The average age of the respondents was 60 years with an age range of 35 – 72 years. Average age of OLM respondents was 63y, SEITE respondents 59y, Southwark Ordination Course (SOC) 66y and other training institutions 53y.

b) Training Institutions

39 (35%) of the respondents trained under the OLM Scheme, 49 (45%) trained at SEITE, 6 (5%) trained on the Southwark Ordination Course (SOC) and 17 (15%) trained at other institutions .

94% of OLM trained and 86% SEITE trained clergy reported that their training experiences had been positive. 83% of those trained at other institutions had positive training experiences.

c) Secular Employment

35% (38) of all respondents are retired, 32% (35) work part time and 31% (34) work full time. 3 respondents are not employed.

22 of the respondents work or worked in education, either as school teachers or college lecturers.

12 work or worked in the health care sector.

10 hold or have held senior positions in their places of work including directors and chief executives.

17 are chaplains. 6 work full time, 8 part time and 3 have retired. 7 are full or part time hospital chaplains, 3 are school chaplains and 2 are part time prison chaplains. 5 have a cathedral based ministry.

A further 9 chaplains replied to the Bishop’s letter stating that as they were in full time ministry, albeit salaried rather than stipended, they did not consider it appropriate to complete the questionnaire.

2 respondents were about to transfer into full time stipendiary ministry.

	Retired	Full time	Part time	Not employed
SEITE	15 (31%)	15 (30%)	17 (35%)	2 (4%)
SOC	3 (50%)	1 (16%)	2 (33%)	-
OLM	19 (49%)	5 (13%)	14 (36%)	1
Other	1	13 (81%)	2 (12%)	-

d) Priestly Ministry in the Work place

One of the purposes for conducting the survey was to determine whether non stipendiary clergy consider their place of secular work as part of their ‘priestly’ ministry.

75% of respondents considered that they did have a priestly role in their place of work. The nature of this ministry was predominantly pastoral and many commented that their ministry had changed following their ordination.

86% felt that their ministry in the work place was an important part of their priestly ministry (including, not surprisingly, all the chaplains who responded to the survey).

There was no significant difference between OLM trained (69%) and SEITE trained (72%) clergy with regard to this question. A higher percentage of clergy trained in other colleges, however, considered their priestly ministry in the work place as important (88%).

66% of those who responded had discussed their work place ministry with someone in the Diocese, usually their training incumbent or archdeacon and 55% had found these discussions helpful and encouraging.

Only 41% had received encouragement from their church in this aspect of their ministry and 51% considered that their training had addressed this aspect of their ministry.

e) Parish Based Ministry

Respondents were asked to identify how many hours per week they spent in parish based ministry.

By Training Body

	0-10	11-20	21-30	30+
All	29%	46%	13%	11%
OLM	18% (29% ft)	47%	18%	16% (100% ret)
SEITE	29% (60% ft)	50%	13%	8% (100% ret)
SOC	40%	40%	-	20%
Other	53%	33%	7%	7%

By Age

	0-10	11-20	21-30	30+
65+	6	23	5	3
60-65	8	10	4	4
50-60	10	13	5	4 (2ret/1ue/1 chap)
<50	8	2	0	2 (1ue/1ft NSM)

24% of respondents indicated that they could undertake more hours for ministry in their parishes than they currently were.

33% of OLMs, 24% of SEITE trained clergy, 40% of SOC trained clergy and 20% of those trained in other institutions could offer more hours for ministry.

36% of respondents hoped to offer more time for parish based ministry in the next 5 years but 28% expected to have to reduce the number of hours offered over the next 5 years.

f) Deployability

At a time when reducing the numbers of stipendiary clergy is being considered, it is important to know how deployable the non stipendiary clergy are.

80% of all respondents considered themselves deployable, 25% on a permanent basis.

Between different training establishments, the figures for deployability were 66% of OLM clergy, 94% of SEITE clergy, 80% of SOC clergy and 71% of clergy trained in other training establishments.

g) Opinion of being Southwark NSM

21% of those surveyed valued the diversity and vibrancy of Southwark Diocese. 37% valued their opportunities for ministry with 8% specifically mentioning the value of ministering to their historic local community. 11% valued the IME training programme and 21% valued the support they received from colleagues including senior colleagues. 5% expressed appreciation that the diocese was undertaking such a survey.

33%, however, expressed feelings of being under valued, being seen as second class priests compared with stipendiary clergy. This was despite the fact that all those who trained on SEITE had trained alongside Stipendiary ordinands with identical programmes of study. 'A priest is a priest' was mentioned, challenging the sense of hierarchy that is perceived to exist.

The titles 'non stipendiary' and 'honorary' were viewed by stipendiary clergy and by some parishioners as indicating a lack of commitment to ministry, despite the fact that a percentage of NSMs work full time in ministry.

20% of respondents felt that the diocese did not understand the time constraints of those in secular employment. A number noted that IME assignments were completed whilst on holiday as working NSM clergy are unable to factor 'study time' into their schedules, unlike stipendiary clergy. The timing of IME, Chapter meetings and CME was a problem for those in secular employment,

The anomaly of sector based chaplains who view themselves as remunerated clergy but who are included in the 'non-stipendiary' clergy category was also noted. The Diocesan Directory appears inconsistent in its categorisation of licensed clergy with some full time sector based chaplains classified as NSM and others as clergy paid by NHS, home office etc.

16% of respondents were frustrated that the experience and skills from their secular work were not used by the diocese. There appeared to be little involvement of NSMs in Diocesan Committees and few opportunities to utilise leadership skills and abilities.

It was noted by 11% of respondents that the Diocese appears to fail to use NSMs strategically.

The separation of NSMs and SMs during IME was viewed negatively by the majority of those who made observations about the negative distinction made between stipendiary and non stipendiary clergy.

15% of OLM trained clergy noted, with sadness, the closure of the OLM training programme.

h) Ongoing participation in future thinking

Respondents were invited to indicate if they would be willing to continue to engage in this process of deliberation.

57% of respondents indicated that they would wish to continue to be involved.

4. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this survey has been to explore the perceptions of non stipendiary clergy in the Diocese of Southwark concerning their priestly role in the secular work place and to determine the potential resource that NSM clergy

provide for parish based ministry and for priestly ministry in the secular work place.

The preliminary results of the survey provide some encouragement and some challenges to those involved in the training of clergy and those involved in strategic thinking about ministry and mission in the Diocese.

The majority of non stipendiary clergy have valued their training before and since ordination and view it as something to be commended in Southwark Diocese. They value the diversity and vibrancy of the diocese and the many and varied opportunities for priestly ministry.

Approximately one quarter of those who responded to the survey undertook more than 20 hours per week in ministry. 11% were undertaking more than 30h per week in ministry. The majority of these were retired or not in employment. 25% of NSM clergy had the current capacity to offer more hours per week in ministry and 36% thought they would be able to offer more hours in ministry over the next five years.

16% believed they had skills and experience from their secular roles that could be used to benefit mission and ministry in the Diocese which were not currently being used.

80% of clergy responding would view themselves as deployable.

Within the NSM pool of clergy is an untapped resource of time, skills and experience that is available for the benefit of mission and ministry in the Diocese. This is particularly significant at the present time with the prospect of possible reductions in the numbers of stipendiary clergy. Whilst it is recognised that not all NSMs are necessarily suited to fill posts from which stipendiary clergy have been lost – some clearly may be. There are questions to be asked about the training and experience provided for non-stipendiary clergy, which should be considered in the light of the selection criteria used and the basis of recommendation for ordained ministry.

There is scope to consider afresh foundational questions around what our expectations are for those being trained for non-stipendiary ministry?

Consideration should be given to house for duty roles, as some clergy have moved out of the Diocese to take up such positions in other diocese, as well as team/associate vicar roles. The possibility of deployment of NSM clergy to assist in the cover of interregna or long term sickness should also be considered. The effective management of NSMs within diocesan structures and their strategic use also merits fresh thought.

Alongside these questions, a number of challenges have been identified through this survey. Over one third of those responding to the survey articulated a sense of being undervalued. This is at Diocesan level with little representation on Diocesan bodies of non stipendiary clergy despite the wealth of skills and

experience, an exclusion from some clergy mailings and little acknowledgment of the pressures of maintaining a secular job whilst contributing to parish based ministry. At the local level, the timing of chapter meetings and the attitude of some stipendiary clergy contributed to the sense of being regarded as 'second rate' clergy. The fact that some NSMs are choosing to move out of the Diocese to take up house for duty posts in other diocese and others are transferring to stipendiary ministry is perhaps indicative of this undervaluing of NSMs. The name 'non stipendiary' is also felt by many to have negative connotations.

The original concept of non stipendiary ministry in Southwark Diocese was based on the worker priests in France. The Southwark Ordination Course historically prepared ordinands for a priestly role in their place of secular work. This understanding of non stipendiary ministry has been lost over the years and the current understanding of the role of non stipendiary clergy in the Diocese of Southwark seems to be as aids and assistants to stipendiary clergy in the parishes of the diocese. Whilst this understanding of role is accepted by the majority of retired NSMs, 75% of NSMs consider that they have or had a priestly role in their place of secular employment and over 80% consider that this role is important. This priestly role in the workplace is not recognised as significant or strategic by the Diocese and there is little relevant training or encouragement in this aspect of ministry.

It must be acknowledged that the stipendiary clergy's experience of working with NSMs also highlights tensions and, as part of further exploring the scope to develop the parish roles of non-stipendiary clergy, it will be helpful to engage with those stipendiary clergy who have experience of working within and managing teams that include NSMs.

5. CONCLUSION

The results of this survey of non stipendiary clergy in the Diocese of Southwark offer some encouragement and some challenges. In view of the urgency of the financial pressures facing the Diocese it is hoped that some work could be started to consider the implications of these findings and develop a strategic and considered response.

We recommend that:

- A cross section of respondents (approximately ten in number) are invited to participate in a focus group to draw out more detailed narrative responses to some of the issues highlighted by the survey ***.(The Focus Group has now met twice and is hoping to report after its next meeting)***
- A method of ongoing communication with those NSMs who have indicated their willingness to be involved in future discussions is developed.***(Under consideration)***

- Consultation with interested stipendiary clergy is initiated to explore areas of effective co-working and also tension. (***About to be instigated***)

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