

Ely Clergy Wellbeing Survey 2016 (Executive Summary – May 2017)

This report is part of the continuing work on clergy wellbeing in the Diocese of Ely. The aim of the work is to determine what encourages the flourishing of the clergy, and therefore the health of the church, and to take actions, where possible, to promote such flourishing.

In June 2014 Ely Diocese invited clergy to participate in the *Managing Ministry Pressure Better (MMPB) Survey*, conducted by St Luke's Healthcare to inform the ongoing work to monitor and support clergy wellbeing in the diocese. The results led to a number of actions being taken as part of the Clergy Wellbeing and Support initiative, under the leadership of Bishops Stephen and David and Canon Sue Wyatt. One follow-up action was to plan for a repeat survey in 2016 with a more targeted focus on clergy *perceptions of what helps/hinders their wellbeing*. The main question of interest for a repeat survey was identified as follows:

What are clergy perceptions of the specific things that help or hinder their personal and professional wellbeing?

Subsidiary questions of interest were:

- a. What do clergy perceive has helped or hindered them in the past?*
- b. What do clergy perceive would help them in the future?*

The repeat survey instrument was developed in consultation with the Focus Group on Clergy Wellbeing set up after the first survey. In June 2016 the electronic survey was distributed electronically to all licensed clergy in the diocese for completion and return in July. A total of 72 surveys were completed, representing approximately a third of the total recipients. Closed responses were analysed quantitatively using Excel software, while more open responses (i.e. free-text comments/suggestions) were analysed qualitatively to identify thematic categories emerging from the data. The key findings from the 2016 survey are summarised below.

Observations from results

- The data showed that in all categories the respondents reflected a good level of diversity, e.g. with regard to years ordained, years in current post, context, etc.
- The age profile shows that some two-thirds of respondents are in their 50s or 60s.
- Of the responses received a greater proportion of those who are unpaid are female and a greater proportion of incumbents are men. This raises issues of equality and potentially of wellbeing.
- The median average number of hours worked in an average week is 50 – meaning that half of the respondents work more than 50 hours. A quarter of respondents work more than 58 hours. It is very likely that overwork is one cause of lack of wellbeing, particularly among those of incumbent status.
- More than three quarters of respondents regularly take a day off, and most take a day in lieu if they have to miss one.
- Clergy often have caring responsibility for others, and some have multiple caring responsibilities.
- More than 4 in 10 of respondents chose predominately positive attributes to describe their wellbeing, but nearly 4 in 10 chose predominantly negative attributes.
- More than 80% of respondents felt their wellbeing had improved or was at least the same as 2 years ago (though we do not know what the baseline was then). 1 in 6 felt their wellbeing had deteriorated.
- Two thirds of respondents rate their wellbeing at 7 out of 10 or better, but 1 in 6 rate it at 5 or worse.

- Respondents reported a variety of specific resources they found helpful, including: print and media; prayer, worship and scripture; courses, training, events and locations; people; and other activities.
- Barriers to taking advantage of those things that give respondents life include: lack of time; work-related issues; family issues; tiredness; burden of administration; lack of colleagues/assistants; lack of planning/organisation; lengthy task lists; busyness; internal/external expectations; lack of personal support from family/friends living nearby; finances; Sunday service demands; stress; guilt; not using one's gifts.
- Support given by churchwardens and congregations varies, from 'I think they are well aware (*of my wellbeing needs*) they watch me like a hawk' to 'very little clue – all busy people themselves'.
- Recurrent themes concerning what would enable greater flourishing among clergy:
 - More time (particularly time for rest and restoration, developing hobbies)
 - Easing of workload, clarity of role (especially priestly), reduction in pressures of administration
 - Strengthening of relationships of support, including frequency and manner of contact from senior clergy; peer support and mentoring; the need for respectful relationships was particularly mentioned by SSM respondents
 - Improved communication to enhance relationships between 'the Diocese' and clergy with regard to personal support (including support with regard to practical matters e.g. buildings and policy templates)

Recommendations

Tables 1-4 on the following pages (pp.3-10) present a comprehensive set of recommendations according to the 3 main areas that emerged from the survey responses, i.e. *Workload, clarity of role and administration; Communication and relationships of support; and Time wisdom*. In discussing how best to present the recommendations, the Research Team also identified a 4th area that we believe would benefit from some dedicated attention and investigation in the future, namely that of *Theological reflection* in the field of clergy wellbeing.

In each of the 4 tables below, the left-hand column presents recommendations in what we hope are accessible and useful statements of intent. For each recommendation in Column 1, we have attempted to capture other information in the columns to the right which may be relevant and/or helpful, namely: any existing policy/practice within the Diocese (Col 2); the current direction of travel, or strategy within the diocese (Col 3); specific actions to be followed up (Col 4), with an indication of likely staffing (Col 5) and likely timescale (Col 6), as far as these are known. The final column in each table tentatively seeks to link each recommendation, as far as it seems possible and helpful to do so, to the strands of the Ely Diocesan Strategy document ***Ely 2025 – People Fully Alive: a strategy for growth***. Most of the recommendations link to the imperative to 'GROW God's church by finding disciples and nurturing leaders' (p.5 of the Strategy document) and they relate to the lever of change reflecting the development of healthy churches and leaders (p.10).

RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM THE 2016 SURVEY

TABLE 1: Workload, clarity of role and administration

RECOMMENDATION	CURRENT SITUATION	CURRENT STRATEGY/ DIRECTION OF TRAVEL	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	WHO?	WHEN?	LINK TO 'ELY 2025' (Diocesan Strategy)
1. Encourage all clergy to develop a clearly defined role description for themselves in order to facilitate conversation with senior staff and PCCs regarding a sustainable workload.	Dept of Ministry now provides training sessions on how to develop a clergy role description (see 2017 Training Programme).	Promote role description development for all diocesan clergy, especially newly appointed clergy and including SSMs.	Review the takeup of this training to date and evaluate its outcomes, (e.g. how many attending, attendee feedback).	Dept of Ministry	To report at each CWF meeting.	<i>GROW</i>
			Set up a focus group (or similar, e.g. tele-survey) to explore the efficacy of clergy role description.	Sue Wyatt (SW), Jenny Gage (JG) and Lynda Taylor (LT) with data supplied by Dept of Ministry	Late 2017	
2. Help clergy and congregations towards a better understanding of the nature and value of 'administration' within the life of the church, and how to facilitate this.	Dept of Ministry now provides regular training on administration for both clergy and support staff (see 2017 Training Programme).	Improve understanding of the nature of administration among clergy and churches, partly to help identify how diocesan resources might be allocated to support parish administration in the longer term.	Review the takeup of this training to date and its outcomes (e.g. how many attending, attendee feedback).	Dept of Ministry	To report at each CWF meeting.	<i>GROW</i>
			Set up a small focus group (or similar, e.g. tele-survey) to explore efficacy of the training so far.	Sue Wyatt (SW), Jenny Gage (JG) and Lynda Taylor (LT) with data supplied by Dept of Ministry	Late 2017	
			Gain overview of current parish	Archdeacons	2018	

			administration policy/practices via annual Articles of Enquiry.			
			Explore the perceived 'kingdom value' of parish administration among clergy.	A possible dissertation project for MA in Pastoral Theology?	2018	
3. Enable clergy and PCCs to be more aware of and have easy access to Diocesan structures, policies and procedures, and their application to the parish. Review central policies that can be used as a template by parishes and communicate these to parish clergy.	Policies that specifically relate to clergy are available on the Diocesan website (e.g. <i>Safeguarding</i> and <i>Dignity at Work</i>). Further discussion is needed with clergy to determine what is being asked for in terms of localised PCC policies.	Disseminate good policy and practice more widely to develop coherence of approach at diocesan and parish levels, and to assist and support parishes in the development of their policy/practice (e.g. through use of templates).	Review the previous Diocesan Handbook contents (e.g. 2004) to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create an up-to-date list of policies/procedures • link existing policies to this list and identify new ones to be written (e.g. <i>Recruitment, Sick Leave, Retirement</i>) • update/develop the Diocesan website to provide easy access to all users in consultation with clergy, CWs and PCCs 	Dir of Ministry +David Thomson Lynda Taylor	April-Oct 2017	<i>GROW</i>

TABLE 2: Communication and relationships of support

RECOMMENDATION	CURRENT SITUATION	CURRENT STRATEGY/ DIRECTION OF TRAVEL	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	WHO?	WHEN?	LINK TO 'ELY 2025' (Diocesan Strategy)
1. Enable more clergy to access professional training and development opportunities offered by the Diocese.	Much is going on already... (see 2017 Training Programme, training courses, Clergy Study Days).	Increase awareness of what's already available, i.e. mentoring, work coach support, leadership training, etc Also identify what the 'gap' is, i.e. is it communicating what's available to clergy? is it a question of time/finance? could the MDR process 'direct' clergy to take more advantage of what's available?	Produce introductory leaflet (trifold) on 'Clergy Wellbeing in the Diocese of Ely'	Sue Wyatt (for content) ??????? (for layout and printing)	Draft for approval at CWF meeting in July.	<i>GROW</i>
			Promote Clergy Study Days as training/prof devt opportunities that can support clergy wellbeing (i.e. external professional input + opps for peer support/interaction)	Dept of Ministry		
			Produce additional trifold leaflets containing useful information on: <i>retreat</i> venues (local, further afield, incl. mention of diocesan budgetary support); arrangements for clergy <i>study leave</i> ; helpful <i>books to read</i> (with reviews).	Lynda Taylor	Sept 2017 [Could the trifold leaflets be made available as pdf downloads on the diocesan website?]	
2. Enable more clergy to access to personal guidance and pastoral	Much is going on already... (see Clergy Wellbeing section of Diocesan website,	Increase awareness of what's already available, i.e. counselling, conflict	Distribute to all clergy card/leaflet with details of Bruce Kinsey's work as	Dept of Ministry	Every 2 years [but could it also be	<i>GROW</i>

support offered by the Diocese and other agencies.	+David's regular letter to clergy)	resilience, mindfulness, etc	Diocesan Adviser on Confidential Clergy Counselling		made available as a pdf download on the diocesan website?]	
			Bishop David's regular letter to clergy to emphasise personal side of life/work balance, and to offer personal episcopal support.	+David	3/4 times a year (Advent, Lent, Summer, Autumn)	
			Update the Diocesan website with more materials/resources relating to personal support, e.g. link to Sheldon Hub.	+David Sue Wyatt	Jul-Dec 2017	
			Generate set of case studies illustrating types of pastoral support available to clergy.	+David	Oct 2017	

<p>3. Enhance communication between parish clergy and their congregations to build stronger, more supportive relationships that will contribute to clergy wellbeing.</p>	<p>The Archdeacons' interaction with parishes, and especially with churchwardens, has made a start in this area, through meetings and also through policy documents such as <i>Dignity at Work</i>.</p>	<p>Raise awareness and provide training for clergy and parishes.</p>	<p>Develop and draft training materials for use with clergy and laity.</p> <p>Trial the draft materials with churches in at least 2 ministry contexts.</p>	<p>Sue Wyatt Jenny Gage Bishop David</p>	<p>May 2017- Oct 2017</p>	<p><i>GROW</i> <i>DEEPEN</i></p>
---	---	--	--	--	-------------------------------	--------------------------------------

TABLE 3: Time wisdom

RECOMMENDATION	CURRENT SITUATION	CURRENT STRATEGY/ DIRECTION OF TRAVEL	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	WHO?	WHEN?	LINK TO 'ELY 2025' (Diocesan Strategy)
1. Ensure that clergy receive clear messages from senior staff giving them permission to allocate (diarise) time for family, friends, study, prayer, etc.	Common Tenure Guidelines already provide some guidance.	Continue to 'reshape the culture' through written and verbal communication channels.	Use Bishop David's regular letter as a continuing means of communication regarding 'permission giving' and encouragement/affirmation for healthy balance.	+David	3/4 times a year (Advent, Lent, Summer, Autumn)	<i>GROW</i>
			Develop set of illustrative 'scenarios' to support clear messaging.	+David	October 2017	
			Discussion at Bishop's senior staff level re consistency of message	+David	???	
			Use website and develop wellbeing flyer (trifold) to support clear messaging.	+David SW, LT, JG	???	
2. Encourage clergy to develop a personal and parish notion of 'time wisdom' that accommodates proper spiritual nourishment and time for 'big thinking'.	The Diocesan MDR process currently addresses some of this in Year A.		Incorporate some discussion on 'time wisdom' into Years B and C of MDR?	Dept of Ministry?	2018	<i>GROW</i>
			Contact Stephen Cherry and explore with him sessions for clergy based on his book. [Maybe even give all clergy a copy of the 60-minute version of his book?]	+David	Training Programme for 2018?	
			Communicate policy and procedures for clergy study leave. [Maybe... Bishop David to hold a 'Party with a Purpose' for clergy to	+David	Jul-Dec 2017	

			explore study leave; invited speakers to be those who've done it before?!]			
			Prepare presentation to roll out at Deanery Chapter and Deanery Synod meetings	+David + SW, LT, JG	Oct-Dec 2017	

TABLE 4: Theological reflection

RECOMMENDATION	CURRENT SITUATION	CURRENT STRATEGY/ DIRECTION OF TRAVEL	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	WHO?	WHEN?	LINK TO 'ELY 2025' (Diocesan Strategy)
<p>1. Engage in some serious theological reflection in the overlapping areas of 'clergy flourishing' and 'church flourishing', and the potential to develop a covenantal relationship.</p>	<p>There appears to exist some good reflection, writing and praxis in this area (e.g. Duke Divinity School Clergy Health Initiative, 2017 Report to General Synod House of Clergy, and the recent publication <i>Healthy Churches, Faithful Pastors</i> by David Keck) but perhaps it would be helpful to ground all that we are seeking to be and do as a Diocese in a clearer theological understanding of the nature of clergy and congregational wellbeing, and what contributes to it.</p>	<p>Sue Wyatt, Jenny Gage and Lynda Taylor to continue working on this as a small Focus Group, in consultation with Diocesan Senior Staff and other members of the Clergy Wellbeing Forum.</p>	24-hr study retreat at Clare Priory to reflect on theological issues	Sue Wyatt, Jenny Gage, Lynda Taylor	3/4 May 2017	<p><i>DEEPEN</i></p>
			Sue to send some pre-reading for this	Sue Wyatt	April 2017	
			Jenny to research material on Trinitarian views of priesthood for us to consider as input to study	Jenny Gage	April 2017	
			Look at the Duke Divinity School website as input to study	Sue Wyatt, Jenny Gage, Lynda Taylor	July 2017	
			Read <i>Healthy Churches Faithful Pastors</i> as input to study	Sue Wyatt, Jenny Gage, Lynda Taylor	July 2017	

Further research

Specific areas for further research identified from the study are:

- Analysis of the whole data set of Diocesan data. This would give proper evidence-based information for setting future policies as well as enabling a comparison of demographic characteristics with the responses from the survey.
- An exploration of the impact of holding multiple roles on clergy wellbeing.
- Any future survey of Diocesan clergy to focus on parish clergy. Parts of the survey were clearly not relevant for other clergy. The wellbeing needs of all clergy are recognised but the prime aim of the work is to discover areas where the wellbeing of parish clergy can be encouraged.

Closing Observations

This work had the explicit aim of discovering what helps and what hinders clergy flourishing in their ministry and to do so by asking clergy directly. The results are, in many ways, not surprising, particularly in terms of naming the key areas of concern for clergy at this time. There is a danger that the familiarity of these areas of concern reduces the extent to which efforts are made to make changes that will have a positive impact on the health of clergy, and consequently on the health of the church.

Some of the areas of concern that were named are those in which there is already some specific development. This is particularly true in the area of professional support for the clergy. In recent years there has been significant growth in the availability of courses and training to support clergy in their work. At present there is a focus on the administration component of ministry and how this work is distributed within the church.

Others of these familiar areas of concern are more complex to address. One is the issue of long working hours, especially where the long hours result in little time away from role; combined with frustration regarding a lack of clarity of role description; and sometimes a sense that no one is taking any notice of them or their work. Clergy, as working adults, carry their own responsibility for setting holiday dates and ensuring time away from role. They also carry responsibility for ensuring that there is adequate time for the growth of their own spiritual life on annual, monthly and daily time scales. It can be hard, though, to carry this responsibility for self-care alone, particularly when clergy feel that the hours worked are in response to the expectations of the congregation and/or senior clergy. It is only through more open conversation with both congregation and fellow clergy, including the willingness of senior clergy not only to listen to implicit or actual criticism, but to act to improve situations where possible, that this can be properly addressed.

Communication was a recurrent theme in the responses to the survey, both with regard to the content and manner of conversations. There is a desire for better communication between clergy and senior clergy regarding what constitutes a reasonable workload and what should be contained within that workload. There is a desire that conversations between clergy colleagues should be characterised by respect, not least respect for the variety of contributions that different clergy make to ministry in a local area.

The other potential for conversations that could make a difference to the flourishing of clergy are those between clergy and PCCs/congregations regarding clergy workload. It is unlikely that congregations want their incumbent to be working 60 or 70 hours a week. This is not good either for the clergy or for the work of the church. It would seem sensible then to open up conversations between clergy and congregations that would enable them together to clarify expectations on the clergy and to have a better understanding of the ordained role and the role of the non-ordained baptised.

The survey revealed a spread amongst clergy with regard to how well they felt they were flourishing at the time of the survey (June 2016). The self-assessment of flourishing was simultaneously encouraging (two thirds of the clergy rating their flourishing at seven or more) and concerning (one in six rating their flourishing at five or less). The aim of the Clergy Wellbeing Forum is to make available to clergy a range of ways to encourage them both professionally and personally; to support clergy in the responsibility that they carry for their own wellbeing and to enable the wider church to support their clergy through greater understanding of the ordained role and their own contribution.

Clergy flourish in an environment of mutual respect and vision, an environment in which a commitment to following Christ is lived out in relationships which reflect the fruit of the Spirit and reveal the love of God to the world. A whole church commitment to the wellbeing of clergy would be a sign for all of the love of Christ: 'By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.' (John 13.35).