



ATHROFA **PADARN** SANT
ST **PADARN'S** INSTITUTE



St Padarn's Institute Listening Days

Research Report



"There is a kind of listening with half an ear that presumes already to know what the other person has to say. It is an impatient, inattentive listening, that despises the brother and is only waiting for a chance to speak and thus get rid of the other person. This is no fulfilment of our obligation, and it is certain that here too our attitude toward our brother only reflects our relationship to God ... Christians have forgotten that the ministry of listening has been committed to them by Him who is Himself the great listener and whose work they should share."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer – Life Together

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1. Introduction: Listening Days

How often do we create the opportunity in our busy lives to pause intentionally, and to reflect on our experiences? Or when do we create space to really listen to God, or indeed to one another?

In 2018, St Padarn's Institute extended an invitation to licensed readers, pastors, pioneers, evangelists and children/youth workers, as well as to all licensed clergy, to attend one of twenty-four 'Listening Days' at different locations throughout Wales.

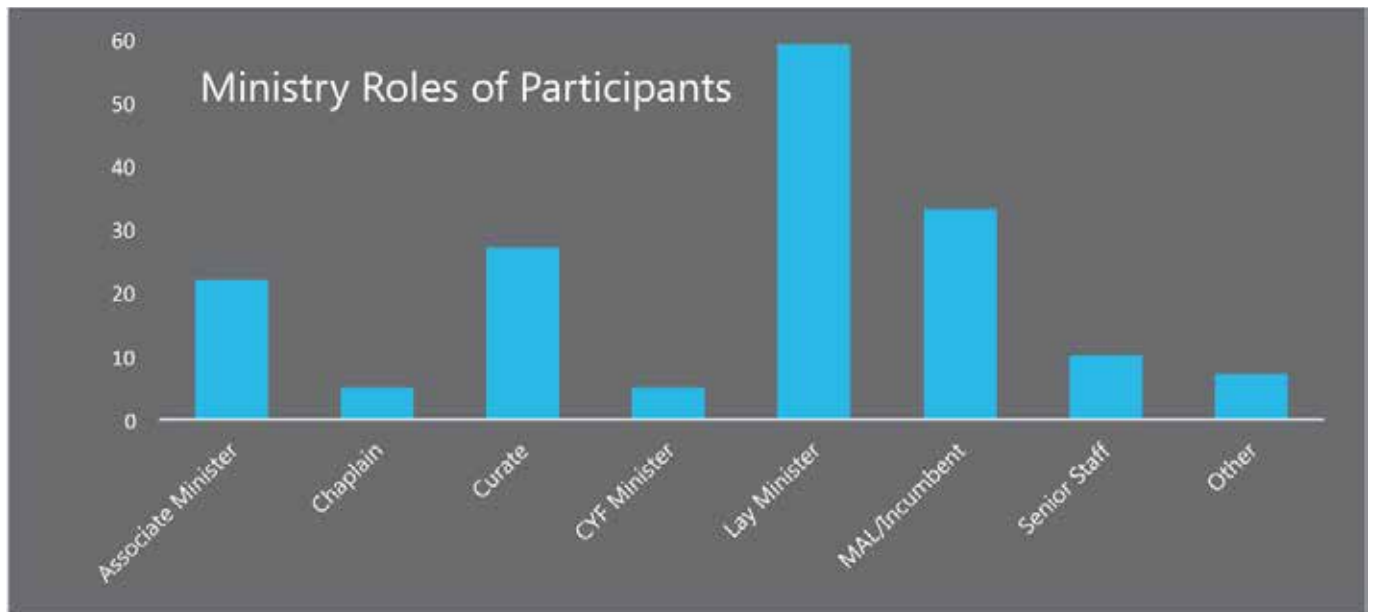
Each day opened and closed with a short act of corporate worship. An extended period of shared silence was then followed by the opportunity to complete a series of 'listening questions' (on a laptop, paper, or in interview format) before lunch and conversation. A fourth element of the day was an optional workshop aimed at deepening our practice of listening.

Respondents in this study represent a wide range of committed and gifted people currently serving as licensed ministers in the Church in Wales today. It is hoped that their input will serve as an encouragement to others, and provide a valuable resource both to St Padarn's and to the church more widely.

Sincere thanks are due to each and everyone who took part in the Listening Days, and indeed in the wider consultation on Ministerial Development.

The commentary in this report has been kept to a minimum as it is hoped that the data itself will offer inspiration for prayer, conversation and engagement

2. Data



Gender	Total	%
Male	82	48.8
Female	81	48.2
Prefer not to say	5	3
	168	100

Income	Total	%
Stipendiary	64	38.1
Non-stipendiary/self-supporting	74	44
Salaried role in CinW	14	8.3
Other	16	9.5
	168	100

The study design including questions used to elicit the Listening Day dataset received ethical approval from Cardiff University. Notable features of the data collected are as follows:

- 1) **Scale:** 168 respondents engaged with the set of 67 distinct questions in English or Welsh inviting reflections on flourishing in ministry, gifting and experience, resourcing needs and demographics. With a range of question types including text responses, this means that the full dataset is an extensive one.
- 2) **Scope:** The Listening Questions were designed in consultation with specialists within the Church in Wales as well as practical theologians and research teams elsewhere. They were piloted in Autumn 2017 and subsequently revised. Questions were varied in format – ranging from multiple choice or single word responses to invitations to share ideas and insights in relation to particular areas of challenge and opportunity for today's church.
- 3) **Diversity:** Those who participated came from all six Dioceses of the Church in Wales, and represent a broad variety of ministry roles, both lay and ordained. As far as we know, this makes it a unique study in terms of ministry research. Its design also aims to affirm and reinforce the Church in Wales, commitment to encourage both lay and ordained, and affirm the ministries of the whole people of God.

3. How is the data being used?

To respond to over 60 'Listening Questions' about the realities of our ministry, and to be honest and vulnerable in our engagement, is a challenging undertaking. Those who participated in this study did so for the mutual benefit of ministers in the Church in Wales, and not primarily as a form of personal professional development. From the outset, we stressed;

- i. Our commitment to share findings
 - ii. Our commitment not to use the data to create extensive 'to do' lists either for individual ministers or for Dioceses.
- We believe that the potential of this approach lies in our corporate reflection on what has been shared.

Since the Listening Days took place we have reflected on the data at seminar days with Listening Day participants and with other groups of ministers, and asked the question simple question, "How might we as a community of ministers respond?"

The Listening Day data has yielded many ideas and insights which will serve as a major resource to help shape and inform our provision of ministerial development going forward.

4. Themes

Each section of this report covers a single theme within the Listening Questions. At the top of the page you will find the questions posed which related to this theme. Underneath we introduce an overview of the responses offered.

Theme 1: Vision

How would you sum up your vision for ministry?

Is there a particular verse or passage of scripture which is an inspiration for you?

Is there a Christian writer or theologian who is an inspiration for you?

Do you have any particular aims or objectives for your ministry?

What do you hope to focus on in your ministry in 2018?

How would you sum up your vision for ministry?

Responses can be grouped as follows:

<p>Going Deeper: Statements of vision in which ministry results from going deeper in relationship with God.</p>	<p>Building Up: Statements in which the minister articulates a vision for building up of the church.</p>	<p>Reaching Out: Statements in which the minister articulates a commitment to mission & evangelism beyond current church membership.</p>	<p>Other: Individual words or groups of words which are more akin to a sentiment or set of values from which a vision may be derived. Also, instinctive responses which reveal something of the individual's current struggles in ministry.</p>
<p>Building Up and Reaching Out: A combination of the above.</p>			

The expression of personal vision, no matter how tentative or undeveloped, may be used as a basis for a coaching conversation, or to help in design of specific resourcing. If we find that we have a grouping with a gifting or calling to evangelism for example, then we might look at how we can best support people in their development. If we find that a certain perspective is under-represented, we might want to look at how we can give those in this smaller group the opportunity to communicate and be encouraged.

Voices (from selected participants):

Going Deeper:

"My vision for ministry is to be a priest who prays deeply and whose vocation is shaped and energized by all that flows from that encounter."

Building Up:

"My vision is clergy and laity working together to become the people God has called us to be."

Reaching Out:

"My vision is to make Jesus known."

Building Up & Reaching Out:

"My vision is bringing people into the presence of God and going out with them as Christ into the world."

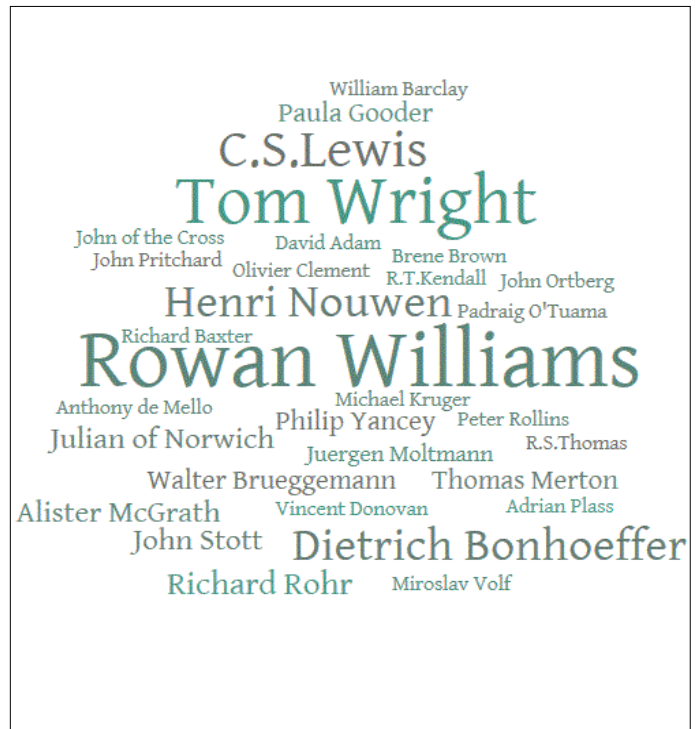
Other:

"My vision is swamped by the demands of day to day activity."

Is there a Christian writer or theologian who is an inspiration for you?

The wordle gives an indication of names that arose on more than one occasion, with Rowan Williams being mentioned 21 times, N.T.Wright 17, C.S. Lewis 12 and Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Henri Nouwen 10 times each.

Data of this kind is no more than a snapshot, but the diversity of writers and theologians who inspire people is notable. We are excited by the potential for introducing those with a teaching ministry to a greater breadth of theological writing, and also to exposing a wider audience to the great treasures within Welsh theological writing and literature.



Voices:

Do you have any particular aims or objectives for your ministry?

"to understand the people and communities I work with."

"to flourish and continue learning and developing."

"to see tens of thousands of children & young people come into the Kingdom of God."

"to get up every time I fall down. To grow in contemplative practice and contemplative action."

"Working alongside people on low income and disadvantaged by poverty."

What do you hope to focus on in your ministry in 2018

"pioneering: trying new things, asking questions, crossing boundaries"

"being more rooted in the Bible and using that in practical ways"

"listening, humility and obedience"

"to try and get the spiritual directors' course up and running"

"to be honest I want to be less tired at the end of 2018"

Something that we as ministers can do is encourage one another by talking about what inspires and motivates us in ministry.

Theme 2: Prayer and Spiritual Formation

Do you regularly pray with others during the week (e.g daily offices / prayer group)?

Do you find time for personal study of scripture?

What is your personal pattern of prayer?

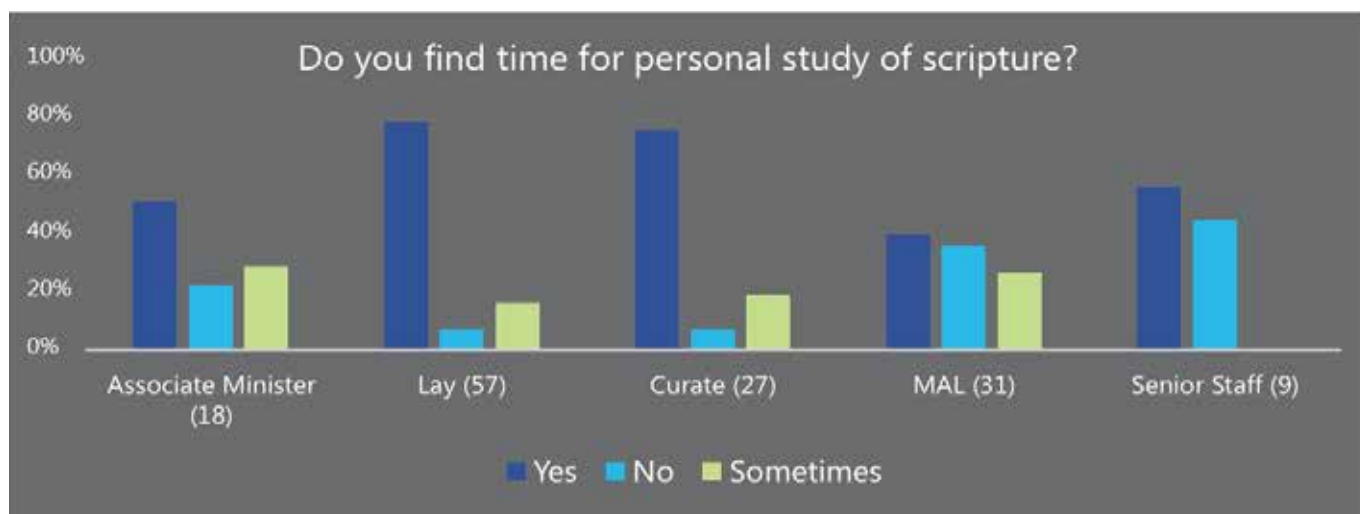
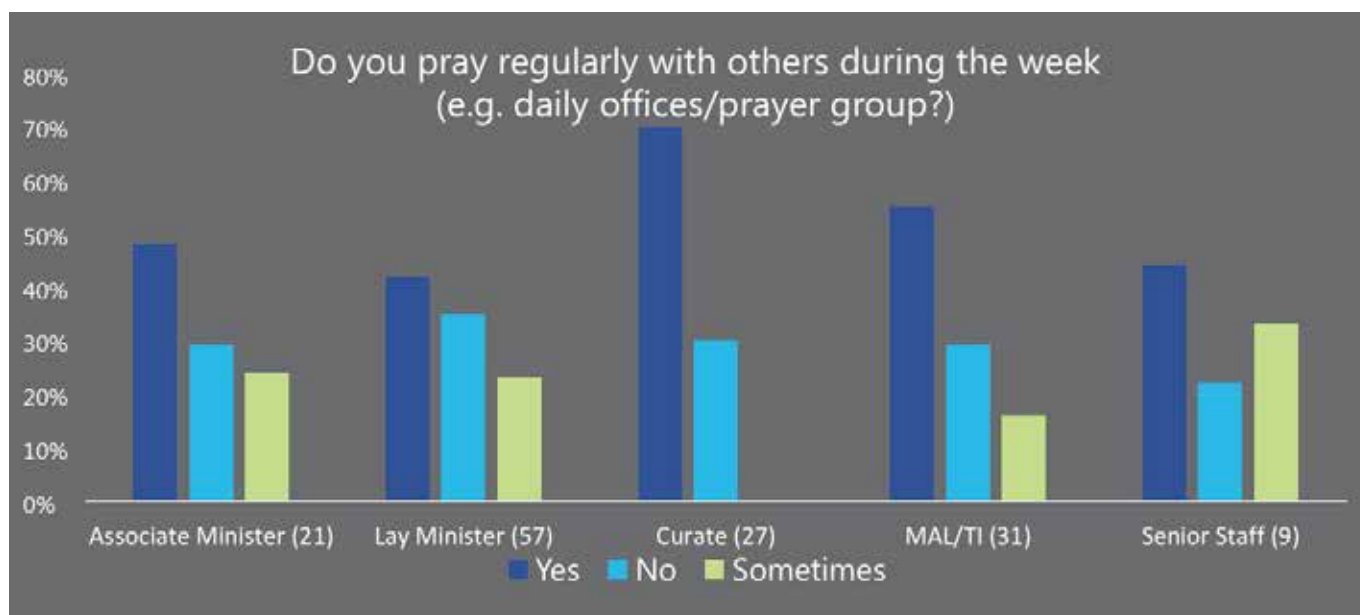
Do you do any other study which is not directly connected with your ministry?

Do you go on retreat? If so, where have you gone in the past year?

If you haven't been on retreat, what makes it difficult for you?

Do you have a spiritual director or soul friend? If yes, how did you first make contact with them?

What would help you to deepen your life of prayer?



What is your personal pattern of prayer?

11% of respondents referred explicitly to the Daily Office and a further 35% to 'morning' or 'evening' prayer, or 'morning and evening' prayer. Some spoke of using the Jesus Prayer or Lectio Divina. 15% said that their pattern of prayer is 'sporadic'.

A number of people made reference to resources they find helpful for daily prayer, including:

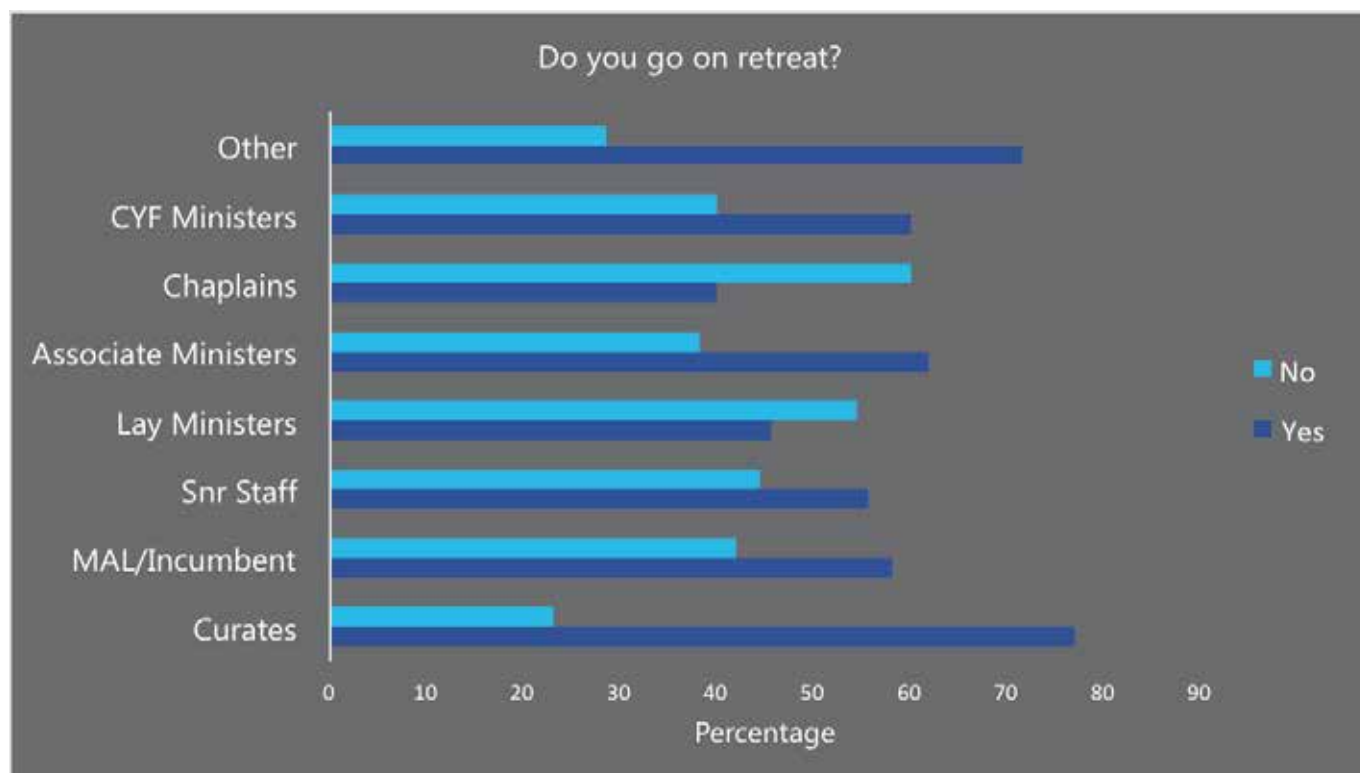
- Common Worship Daily Prayer app
- Pray as you go app
- Franciscan Daily Office
- Northumbria Community Daily Prayer
- Celtic Daily Prayer
- Jesuit Daily Readings
- Word Live
- Iona Community Daily Prayer
- Bible Society Daily Reflections
- Bible Society Micro-Proclaimer

Do you find time for personal study of scripture?

37 people gave an answer along the lines of 'Yes but only for sermons/No, only for sermons'.

Do you do any study which is not directly connected with your ministry?

66 people said 'yes' and 78 people said 'no'. Areas of study included: Welsh Language, Counselling, Poetry, Painting, Textiles, Writing, Music, Local History, Modern Languages, Islam and Principles of Flight.



If you've been on retreat in the last year, where have you gone?

In Wales:

Bardsey Island (2)
Belmont Abbey (2)
Caldey Abbey
Kite's Cottage, Carmarthenshire
Llanerchwen (3)
Llangasty (10)
Llantarnam Abbey (5)
Nant Gwrtheyrn (5)
Nicholaston House (4)
Noddfa (2)
St Beuno's (9)
St Non's (3)
Ty Mawr Convent (6)

Elsewhere:

All Saints Convent, Oxford
Alnmouth Friary (SSF),
Northumberland (2)
Alton Abbey
Convent of the Incarnation, Oxford
Galilee
Glendalough Pilgrimage
Hillfield Priory
Holy Cross, Costok
Holy Rood House, Thirsk
Lee Abbey (4)
Lindisfarne
Loretto Centre with Maranatha
Mirfield - Community of the
Resurrection (2)
Northumbria Community House

RC Retreat House, Essex
Sheldon (3)
Sisters of Jesus Way, West Kirby (2)
Sisters of St Andrew, Lewisham
Walsingham

Less specific...

At a friend's house
Cistercian Abbey
Cumbria
Diocesan Retreat
Dogsitting
My hermitage
Pembrokeshire and Devon
Tiverton

Do you have a spiritual director or soul friend?

Only 58% of Listening Day participants said 'Yes'.

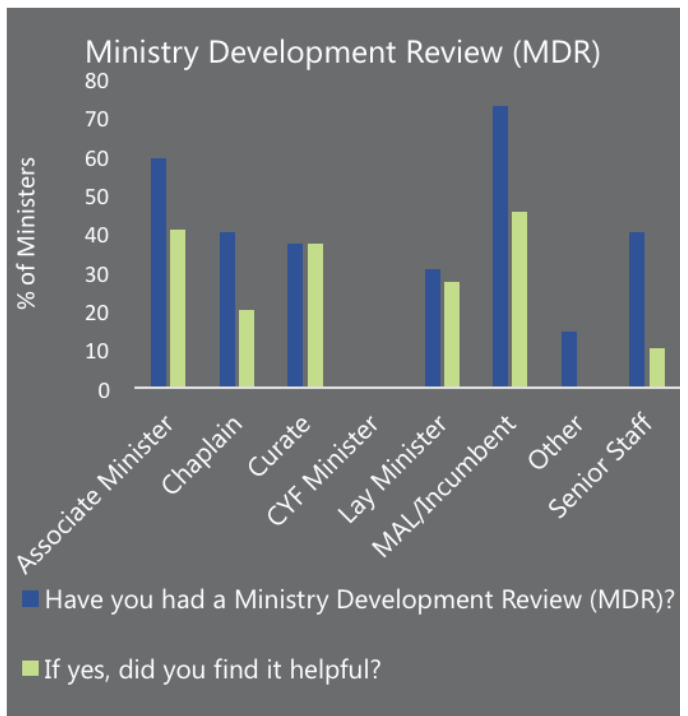
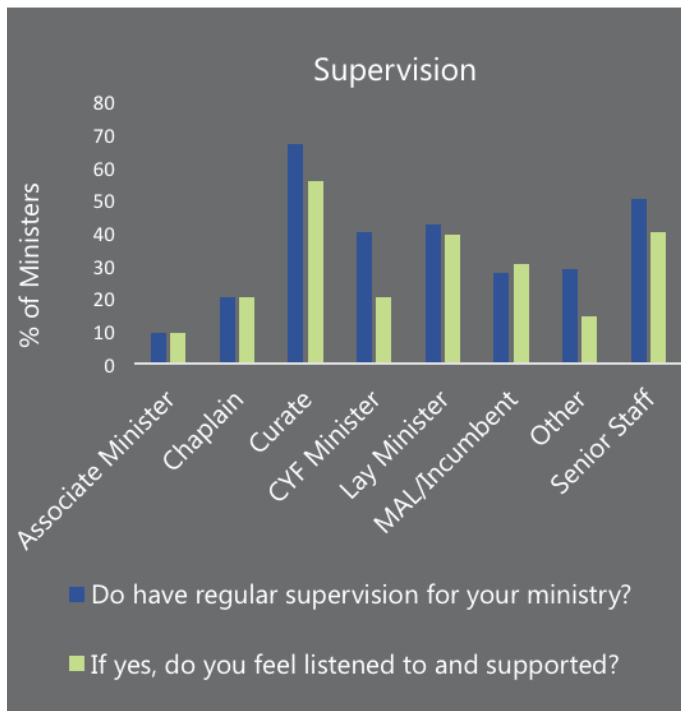
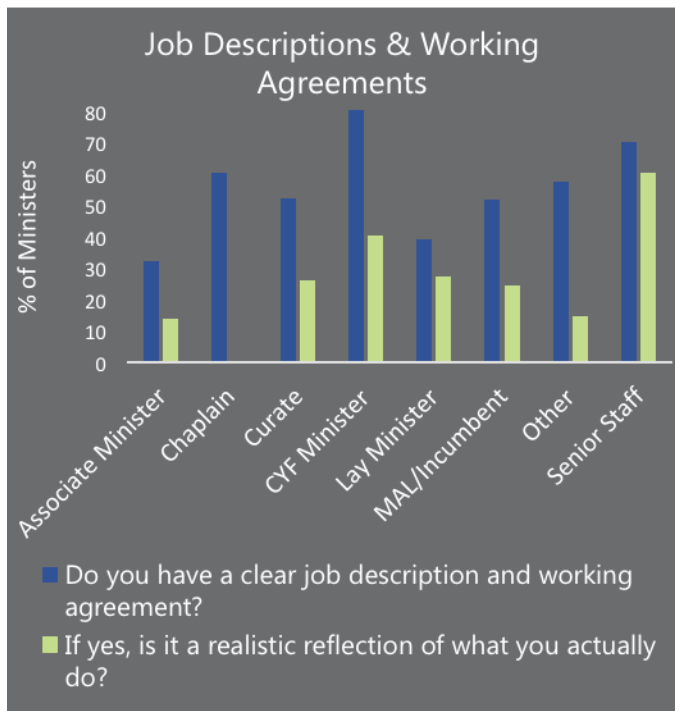
What would help you deepen your life of prayer?

Answers may be grouped as follows (response a) arose most frequently):

- a) Opportunity to pray with other people more
- b) More regular retreats away from the parish
- c) More time
- d) More self-discipline
- e) Having a spiritual director
- f) Better prayer resources
- g) Less pressure to deliver

Something that all those called to Christian ministry have in common is that we seek to accompany others in their walk with God. It is important that we ourselves have the opportunity to benefit from such accompaniment. Terminology can be a distraction, with some ministers being unfamiliar with what is meant by 'Spiritual Direction', or feeling that it belongs to a different tradition from their own.

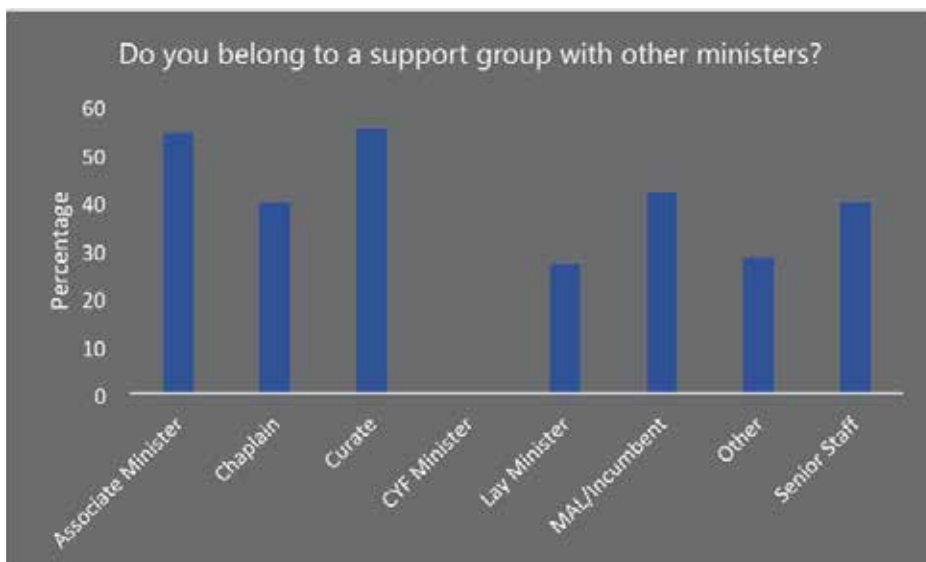
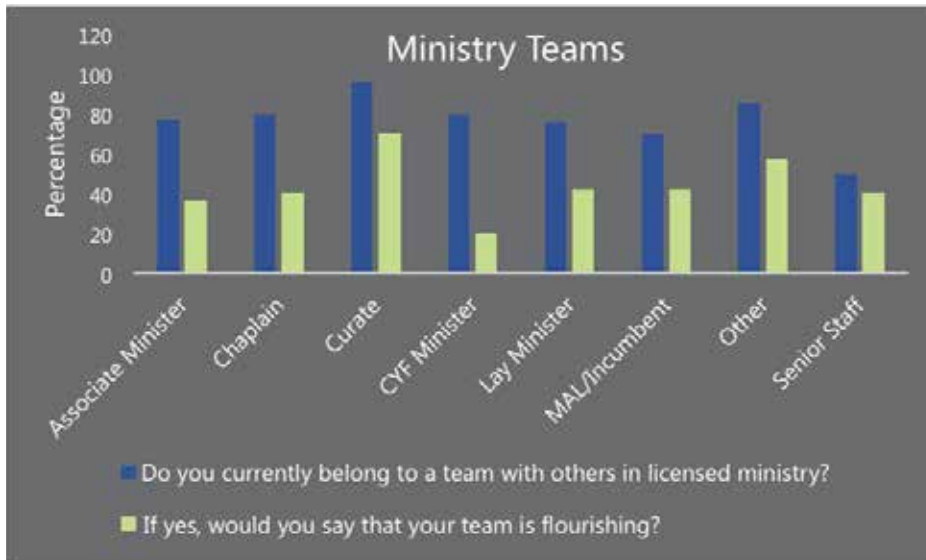
Theme 3: Roles and Review



The Listening Day responses reveal quite starkly that many of us are anything but clear about our responsibilities in ministry or what we feel is expected of us. It is important therefore that we take time to regularly and prayerfully reflect on our calling, and work collaboratively to support and encourage one another to continually exercise and develop the unique gifts which God has given each of us.

Theme 4: Teams and Mutual Support

Do you currently belong to a team with others in licensed ministry?
 If yes, would you say that your team is flourishing?
 Do you belong to a support group with other ministers?
 What helps you to feel valued and encouraged in your ministry?
 How do you currently support and encourage one another in your ministry team?
 Please share something that has encouraged you personally in your ministry in the last couple of years.



Voices:

What helps you to feel valued and encouraged in your ministry?

"I don't look like I do, but I do need words of affirmation."

"Feedback, companionship, being part of a great team."

"Not knowing the real impact of God working through me. Then suddenly finding out!"

Voices:

How do you currently support and encourage one another in your ministry team?

"Give feedback regularly. Help one another to do things. Pray for one another."

"We have ministry team meetings every month. By going out for breakfast and discussing issues and projects we encourage each other in our ministries."

"We don't apart from meeting to timetable services and a little time to talk. I can make an appointment to speak to my incumbent if I need to but nothing regular."

"I don't think we're very good at it - all I manage to do is occasional texts and positive comments after a service or event."

"We have not met in over 2 months and we have not worshipped together for even longer."

Please share something that has encouraged you personally in your ministry.

"Receiving grants from the Isla Johnston Trust for travel and study."

"The first ever provincial Welsh Conference where it was possible for Welsh-speaking Anglicans to feel normal and appreciated. There is a need for this to continue in the province as a way of stimulating mission to the Welsh community and to do this also in the Dioceses. There is a need to grow the confidence of Welsh speakers and exploit and foster the dedication of learners also."

"Being part of a small group founding a new congregation in a village that has had no Anglican worshipping presence for 30 years."

"Seeing a lady of ninety receive physical restoration to one of her legs so that she is able to walk comfortably, and the fingers of her formerly arthritic right hand uncurl such that she has regained full use of that arm (amongst others). Nothing is impossible for God."

"Learning from the new Church Mission Society approaches to mission, especially learning to reframe my conversations from "We are doing" to "God is doing"."

"The opportunity arose three years ago to start a weekly cafe-style all-age worship service. Over the intervening time, the congregation has become a family, has grown in number, and is reaching people who were previously not members of a church. There's a spiritual hunger, and we've seen significant spiritual growth and answers to prayer."

"Preaching in Welsh for the first time. That was brilliant."

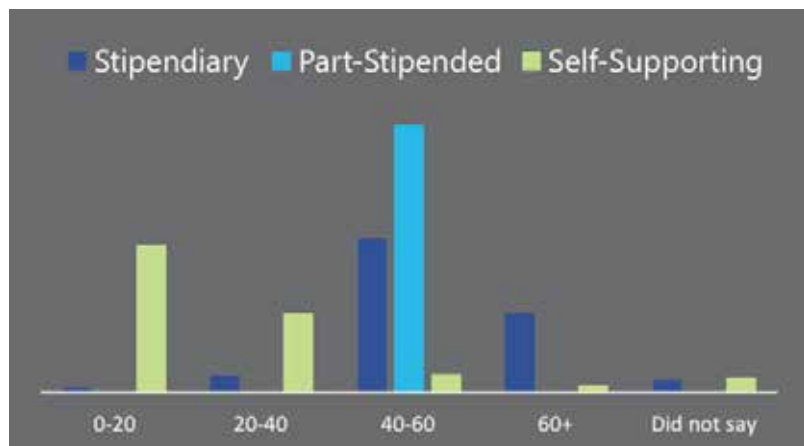
"Spiritual formation workshops led by Mark Yaconelli... It felt like this was what Christian ministry ought to be about and helped give a proper perspective about what the Church could be offering to people"

The Listening Day responses make it clear that ongoing Ministerial Development is not necessarily all about courses and training. For some, what is most urgently needed is a listening ear and a word of encouragement. The voices we hear above give an indication of just how critical this contribution can be.

It is apparent that we have a long way to go in developing healthy ministry teams. Responses to the questions above painted a picture of isolated ministers who occasionally communicate with one another, with flourishing missional teams being the exception rather than the rule. As ministers we must prioritise connecting with one another for prayer and fellowship during the week. Where travelling is difficult or impractical, then simply scheduling a regular phone or skype 'prayer call' has the potential to be enormously significant

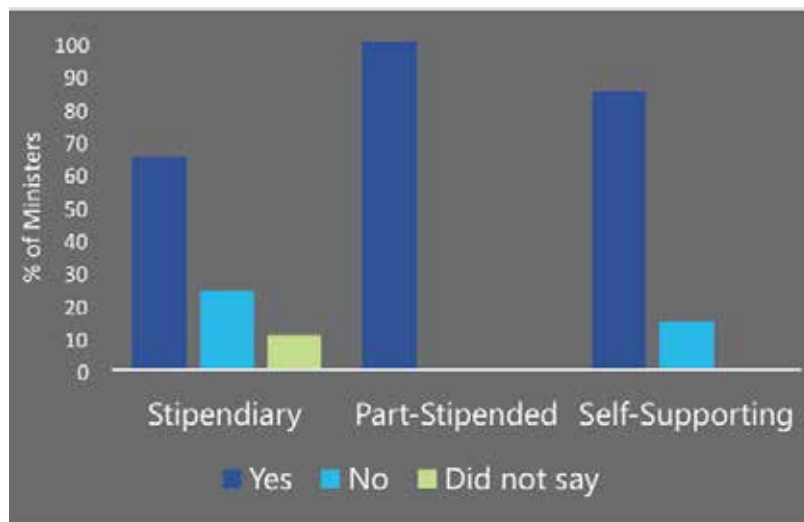
Theme 5: Use of Time

How many hours do you spend in ministry per week?



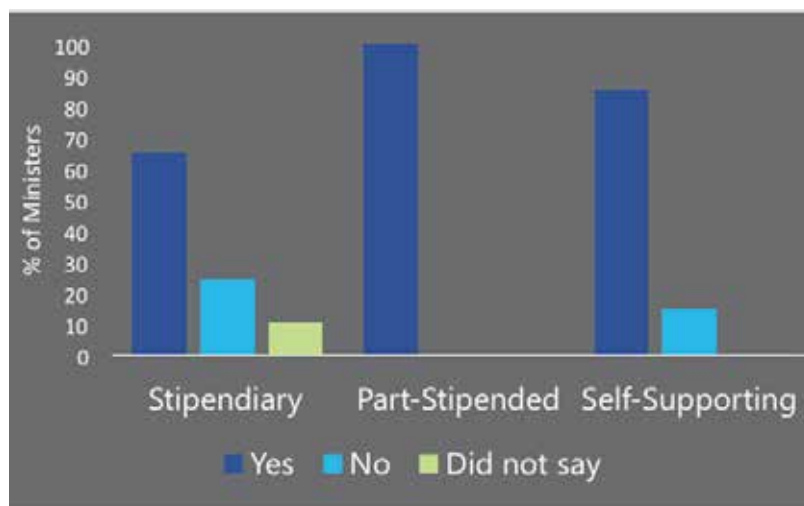
Voices:
36 people who haven't been on retreat in the last year gave 'lack of time' as a reason.

Do you take at least one day off per week?



Voices:
One member of Senior Staff of a Diocese said "Yes, two sometimes."

Do you take at least one day off per week?



Voices:
Ministers frequently spoke of the challenges of "balancing the demands of ministry with work and family life. It is usually family life that is squeezed and my prayer life suffers."

Voices:

The topic of time arises frequently across the whole dataset:

'I would like more...'

'time set aside for reading and study'

'time for listening prayer and study'

'quiet reflective time'

'days such as today'

'times of solitude and retreat'

'time to be with Christ'

Ministers described their anxieties in relation to time:

'not having enough time to do what is needed'

'not having have enough time to complete things ready for the Sunday services'

'being stretched too thinly and losing my own resourcing through missing time in prayer and spending more time in administration and finance than with people'

'I am fulfilling a different role as a priest since I was ordained... the call and demands on our time sometimes take us away from our God given calling.'

Some ministers identified time management as their greatest challenge in ministry:

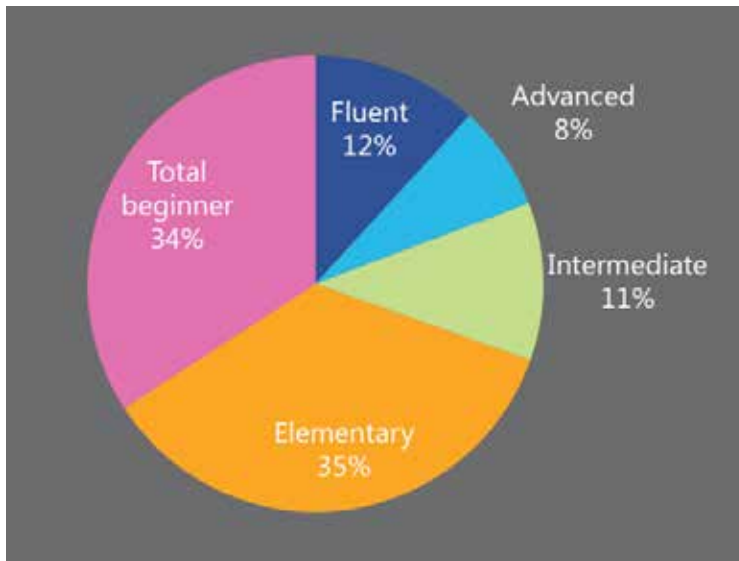
'being able to push through projects which require more time and effort against the constant demands of the day to day issues.'

Many of the voices responding to the Listening Day questions made comments about the scarcity of time. No one is able to create more time, so we must be confident in the conviction that we have all the time we need for what God has required us to do.

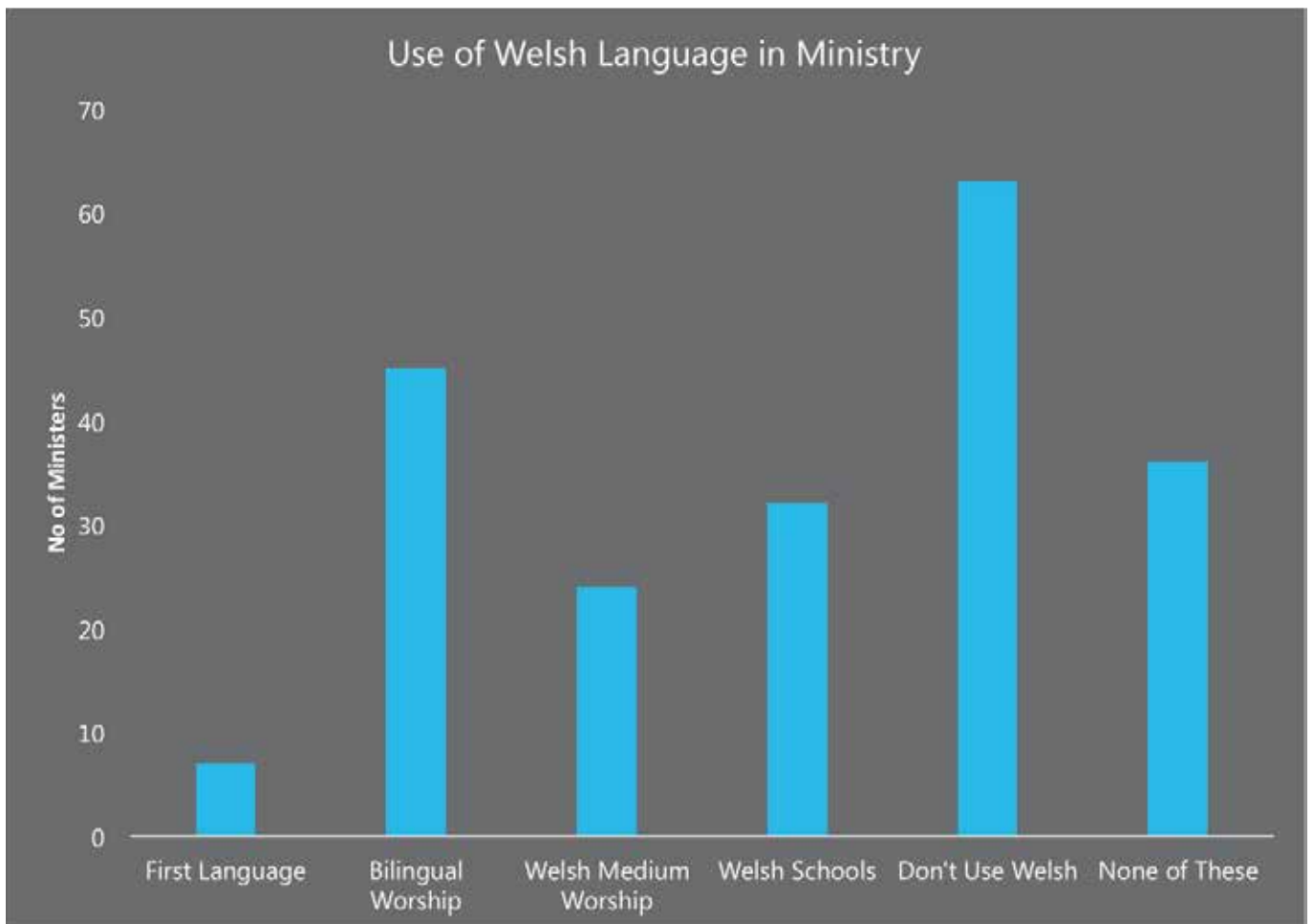
There can sometimes appear to be a competitive culture amongst ministers with litanies of unrivalled busy-ness along the lines of 'I haven't had a day off for three months'. Obviously, this is not something to be encouraged, and something which we can all commit to eliminating. When asked whether we regularly take a day out per week, one quarter of stipendiary clergy said 'No'. Just one respondent in the whole cohort said 'Sometimes I take two.' In the event that this listening process is repeated, it would be really encouraging to hear many more remark that 'I regularly take two days off per week and I, my family and my church context are flourishing as a result!'

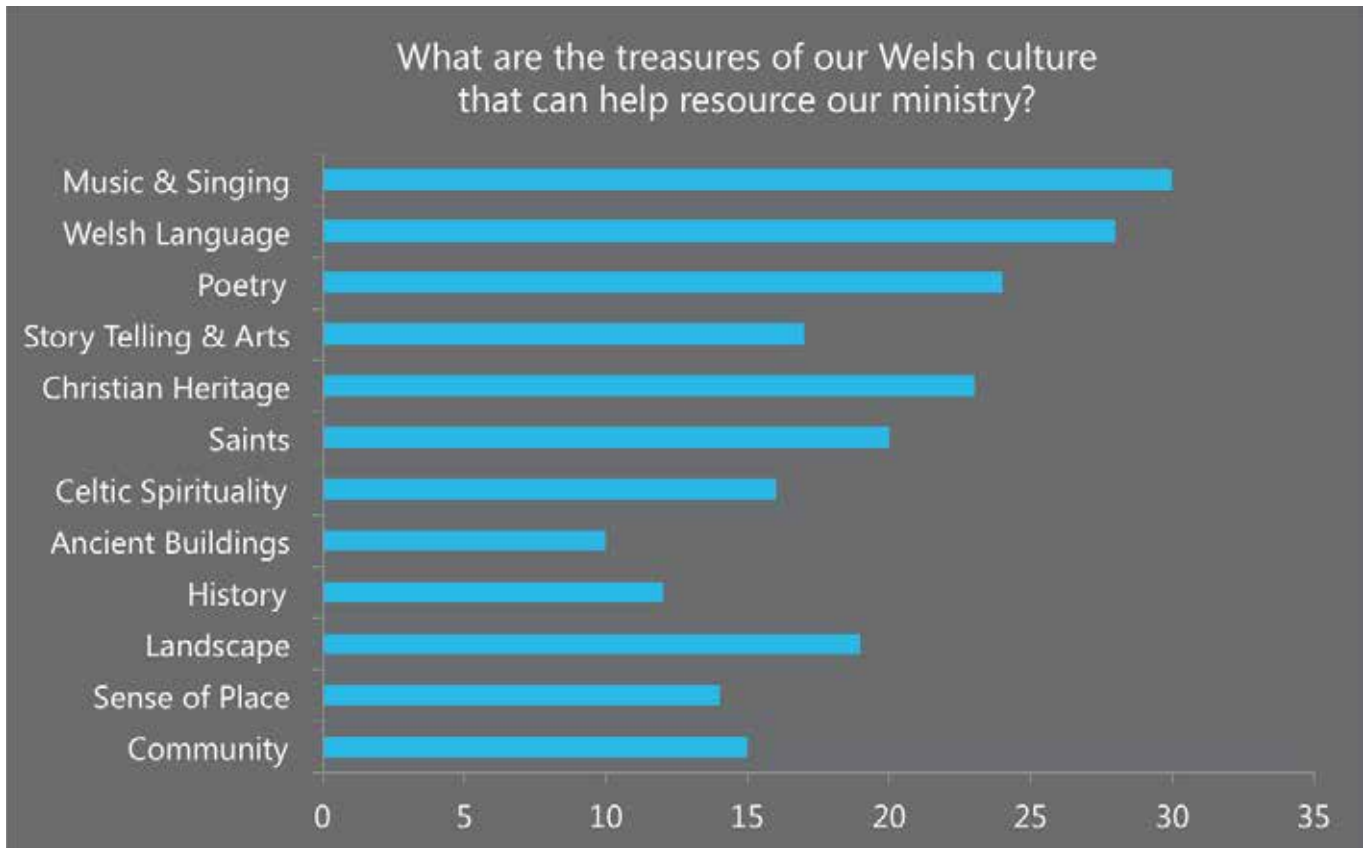
Theme 6: Welsh Language and Heritage

What is your level of fluency in the Welsh language?



Fluent	19
Advanced	12
Intermediate	18
Elementary	57
Total beginner	55
Did not specify	7
	168





Respondents offered plenty of enthusiastic responses to this question, covering themes of Welsh language, the arts (especially poetry and music, both traditional and contemporary), Christian heritage (including the Saints, Celtic spirituality, ancient holy places and pilgrim ways). Although there is an awareness that different people mean different things when they speak of the ‘Celtic Christian’ tradition, one respondent commented that: ‘whilst we know little detail of original form and liturgy, the enthusiasm shown for what we assume it was like demonstrates what people need today’. A considerable number of answers alluded to the significance of place and landscape within the Welsh culture. Others described an emphasis on community and relationships which they feel is particularly strong in the South Wales valleys (‘the Welsh tradition of a community culture is a treasure beyond price’).

Some ministers offered caveats – the need to remember that it is ultimately God who resources our ministry and that the Christian Gospel is for all cultures. Some mentioned cultural stereotyping which they feel to be unhelpful (‘daffodils and Welsh ladies’) and others called for caution in describing Wales as having a specifically Christian culture (‘people think we’re Christian because of the revival but now there is no one living who remembers it’).

There were occasional mentions of specific names or places that respondents regarded as important. These included figures such as William Williams Pantycelyn, Mary Jones, Thomas Charles and the Bible Society and ancient pilgrim places such as St David’s, St Non’s, Bardsey, Caldey and Ewenny Priory.

Voices:

Suggestions about how we might make use of our cultural heritage in ministry included the following:

"We need to reconnect the people of Wales today with the stories of our past. We need to rediscover their power and inspiration in our own church life, and thereby offer and re-present them as living faith to the modern communities we serve today."

"We are inheritors of the saints from the last 1700 years in this land. Can we leave behind our obsession with the last 150 please?!"

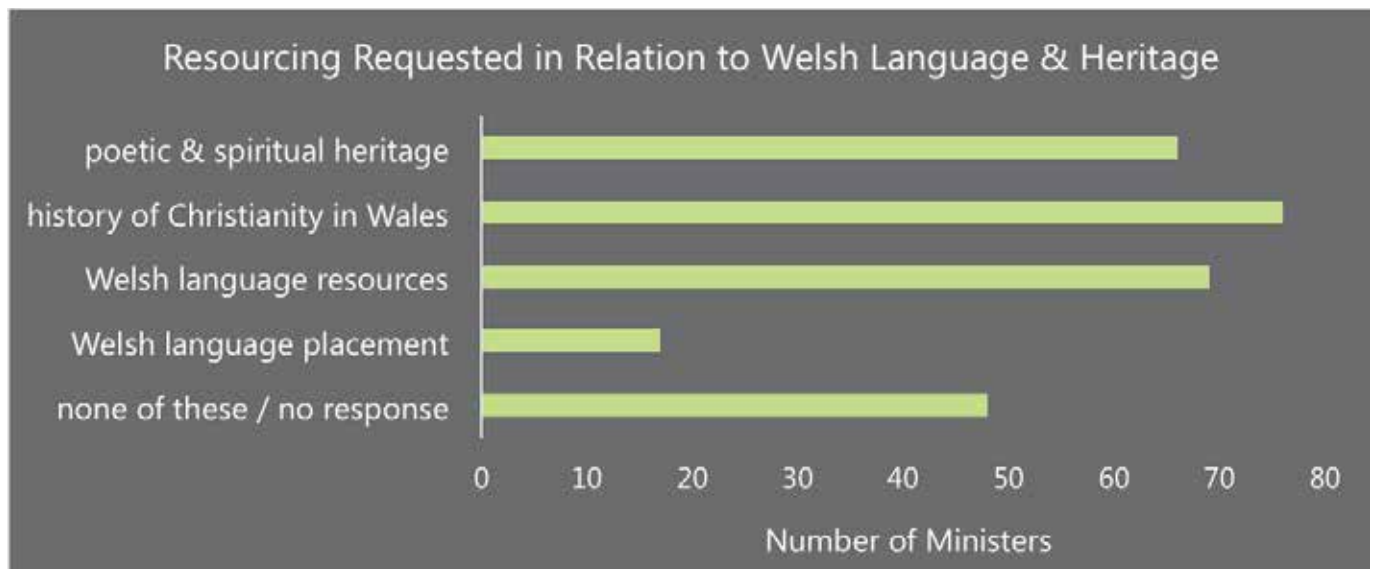
"The medieval mystery plays were performed to teach people their faith; what could we do to harness enthusiasm for the arts to teach today's generation the story of God?"

"We can open up pilgrim routes short and long, to encourage visits to our older churches with explanations, and encourage schools by producing history packs for teachers."

"We are a land that has been consecrated by Saints – so many. I'd love to be part of a church that actively seeks to befriend these holy women and men – not as departed souls, but as living presence whose lives can inspire us, connect us to deep, ongoing tradition, and whose intercessions can bless us."

Requests for Welsh Language Resourcing

When asked what skills and resources they need in order to better connect with their local context, 22 people said that they need to improve their Welsh language. Some specified the importance for them of liturgical Welsh and others of improved ability to conduct informal conversations. There were also requests for more Welsh language resources for Worship and one respondent declared that 'my Welsh is my biggest problem'.



Voices:

"I would like to request courses on evangelism in the Welsh language and bilingually that connect with contemporary Wales."

"I am looking at organising Welsh classes informally. The problem with a formal course is the sheer number of 'specific' hours it takes out of the week when I can't be available for funerals, etc."

"One of the problems in trying to learn Welsh, apart from age, was not having enough time because I was trying to get to grips with the demands of the parishes at the same time. I didn't know about Nant Gwrtheyrn courses until I had already started – giving English incomers the opportunity to learn before they start would be good."

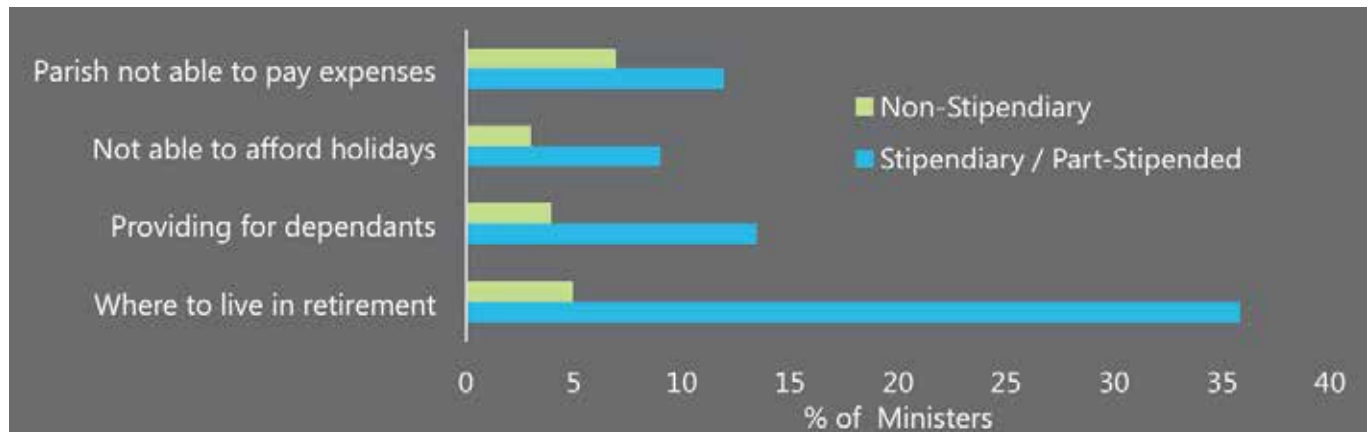
The 2018 Eisteddfod in Cardiff Bay was applauded by many for its celebration of the Welsh language and contemporary arts and culture in Wales. Amongst the Listening Day respondents, only 11% of licensed ministers said that they are fluent Welsh speakers. Many said that they would like help in improving their Welsh.

The majority of stipendiary clergy who have learned and attained fluency in the language completed an intensive 'Wlpan' course over a period of three months. It is clearly very hard to progress from classroom courses to actually using the language day to day.

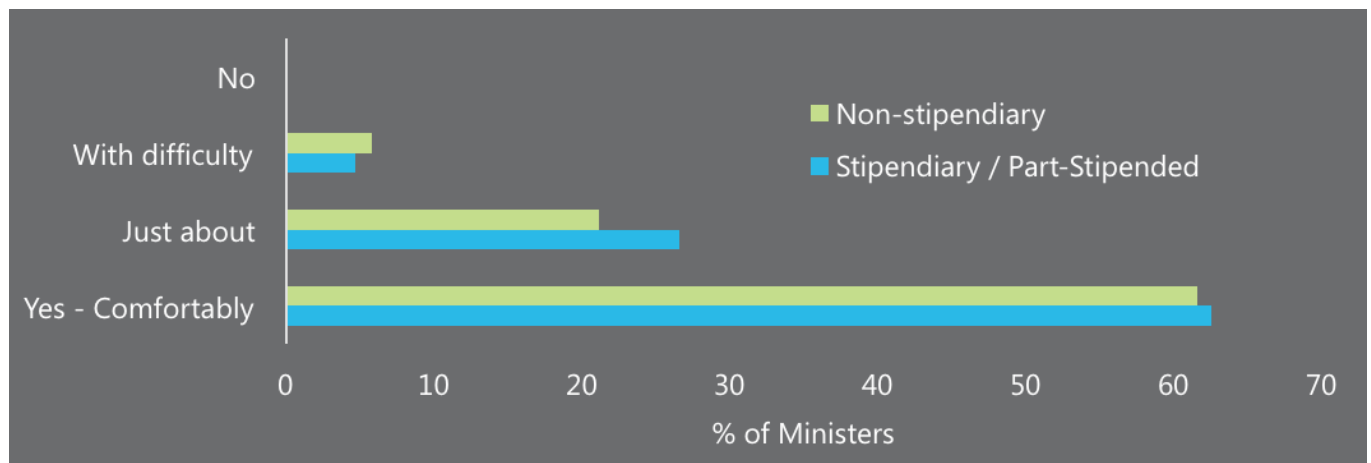
Those ministers who are fluent Welsh speakers need to be encouraged to organise more Welsh language worship and events – creating opportunities for learners to be immersed in the language and develop confidence in speaking.

Theme 7: Finance

Are any of the following a cause of worry or concern for you?



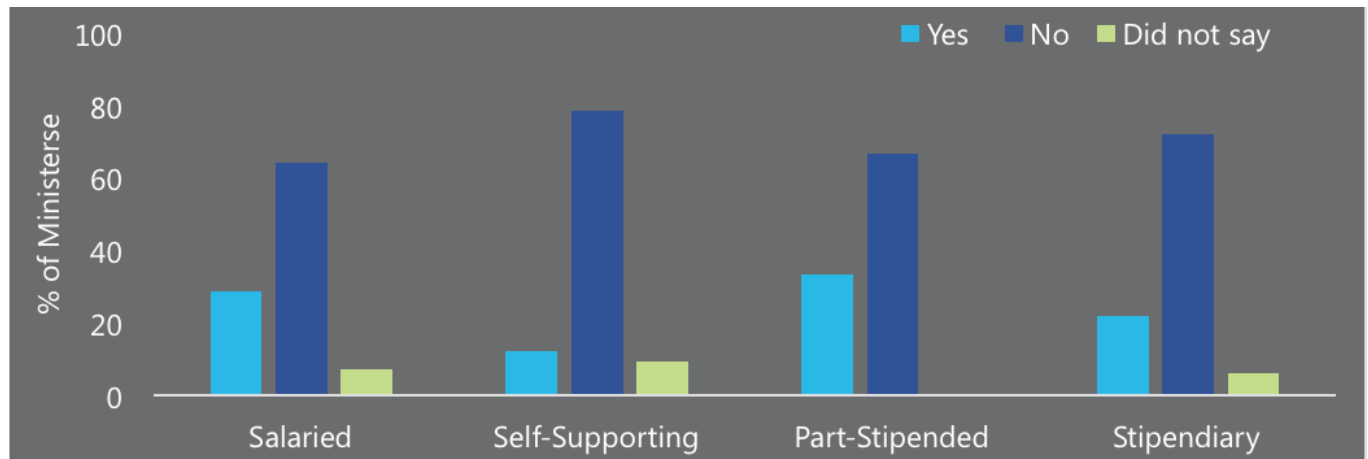
Do you find that you are able to meet your day-to-day living costs?



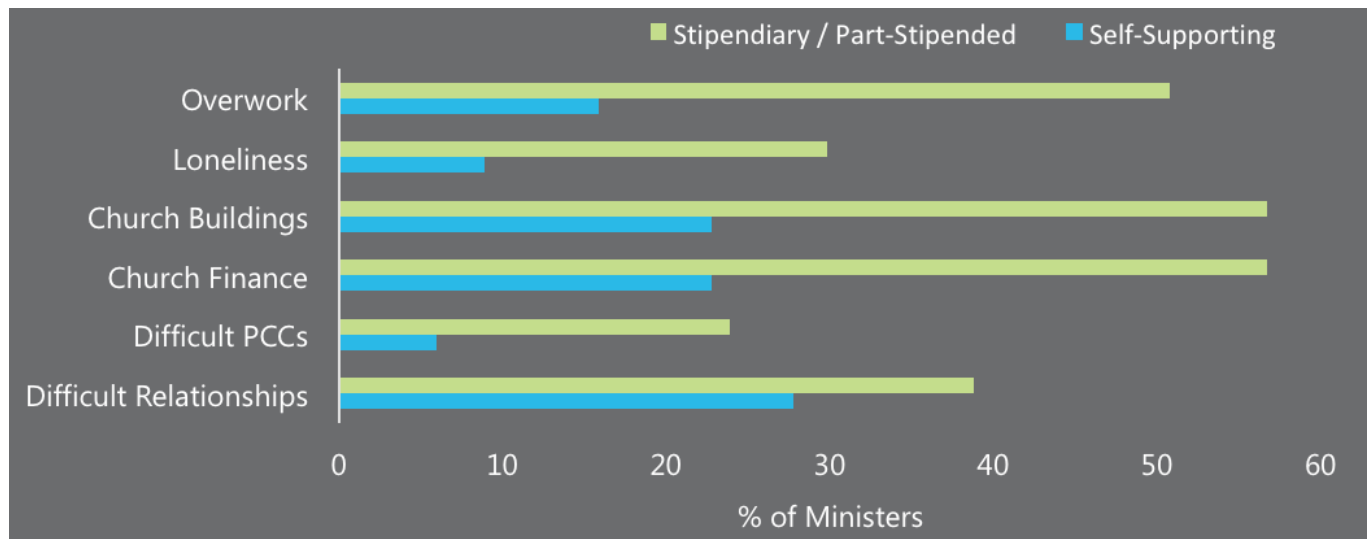
It is interesting to note that the responses to the question about meeting day-to-day living costs are very similar indeed, regardless of whether a minister is stipended or not. In contrast, the striking finding here is that for over a third of stipended ministers the question of where they will live in retirement is a cause of worry or concern for them.

Theme 8 – Pressure and Challenges

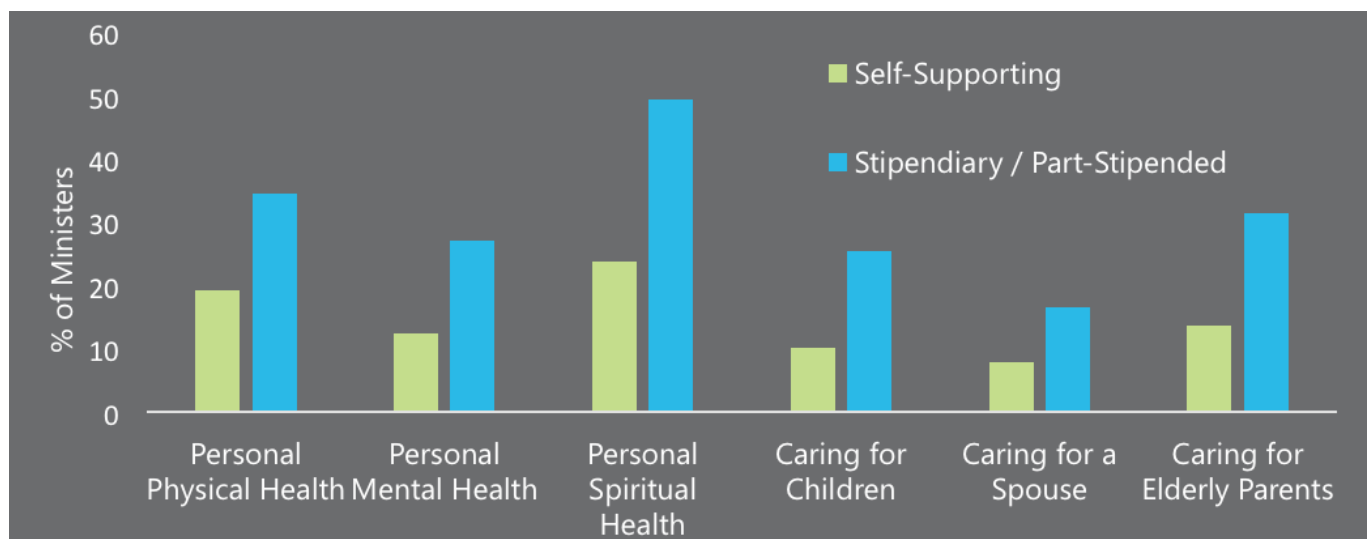
Have you ever had to take time off from ministry due to stress or overwork?



Are any of the following areas of pressure or challenge for you in your ministry context?



Are any of the following current areas of challenge or pressure in your personal life?



What has been most challenging for you in your ministry?

Responses to this question tended to relate to one of a small number of recurring themes:

- Lay Ministers feeling unaccepted and undervalued
- Conflict between current expectations and the need / desire to embark on new initiatives
- Coping with change or resistance to change
- Feelings of isolation and lack of support and encouragement
- Bullying and relational conflict on the local level
- Frustration with hierarchical structures in the church
- Work / Life balance

Voices: What has been most challenging?

"Finding out at times just how alone it can feel to be a priest. Some of the most important things I have had to do have come at a cost to myself, my marriage and my family."

"I still cannot honestly say I feel like a 'minister' as, although I would say I am fully engaged in ministry, there is such a culture in the Church in Wales of clericalisation and lay ministers are often left feeling second class."

"Working with a previous incumbent whose own lack of confidence led to extreme defensiveness and an unwillingness to accept help I could offer, to the detriment of everyone concerned."

"One particular church. It is not growing, not engaging with the community around it, not showing any interest in moving forward... It is the definition of madness - doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. They want more people in the church, they want the church to continue, but won't consider doing anything differently... I want to see growth, but this means change and I have been unable to get any significant change."

Voices: What has been most challenging?

"I find it hard to cope with people's expectations. I find it difficult when people are critical of each other as well as me. I feel its relentless each week to 'have' to come up with something 'special' every Sunday or every funeral or every wedding. It's just never ending."

"I struggle with the lack of confidence in the Gospel exemplified in the Church as an institution and of which I am a part. I find myself buying into new strategies and terminology in the hope that these are a panacea for falling numbers."

"Coping with the hierarchical structures of the Diocese. Dealing with some in authority who do not use that authority appropriately - for example, being unable to make difficult decisions or there are examples of bullying."

"Watching clergy be destroyed by being put into the wrong place, not being supported and not necessarily being listened to."

"Lack of support from senior staff in the diocese (who are no doubt also feeling overstretched!) and do not understand just how much one word of encouragement can mean."

"Decision-making structures which are opaque.... Decisions are always taken behind closed doors without you there, and what you get is someone (archdeacon etc.) ferrying information back and forth between you and some 'group' who is deciding. When can we have leaders who are responsible for things, who take up the burden of that, have honest face to face conversations even if they are hard, and do not hide between process and structures?"

Voices: What are your greatest fears in ministry?

"My biggest fear is burnout, stress related illnesses of which we see already and the impact it is having not only on clergy but parishes, colleagues & families."

"That we all end up running from one church to another every Sunday to minister to the same, but diminishing, congregations and that nothing we do halts the oncoming collapse of organised religion: that may be a good thing, but I'm not sure that I want to witness it!"

"Providing terminal care for a dying congregation that cannot break free from bondage to traditions and its building. Worship of things and ways of doing things - rather than worship of the living God."

"Congregations are dwindling, and those remaining dictate how the Church is run."

"The Bishop has asked me to lead a new Ministry Area, but I'm not very sure what the role means, and what exactly is the process of changing from the current situation to the new one.."

"The institutional anxiety which seems to be affecting the church at this time of change. It manifests itself in initiatives to try and encourage the Church to grow - they are well-meaning but I feel add pressure and can make the Church appear superficial."

"Not having the courage, the confidence, or the wisdom to be bold in vision when faced with the challenges of difficult church politics - facing the pressures that come from within the church are somehow a lot more difficult that facing the challenges that come from without."

"I fear that the church in Wales is soon going to be no more. The current trajectory is terrifying. I fear that we are not strong or creative enough to do things differently and to be realistic about the way ahead."

It is both painful and important to listen to the voices reported here and many others like them. Ministers in very different contexts across the Church in Wales are making similar statements – there is in fact a relatively small number of issues and we have the opportunity together to bring them to God in prayer.

We report feeling isolated and alone the challenges we face – the data in this study suggest that ministers are unaware that many of our colleagues are struggling with similar situations.

Many of the challenging situations we describe arise from the reality that to lead in ministry today means to be a leader of change. It is therefore essential that, as individuals and as the wider church, we pray for one another and offer whatever practical support we can to one another.

Theme 9: Gifts and Experience

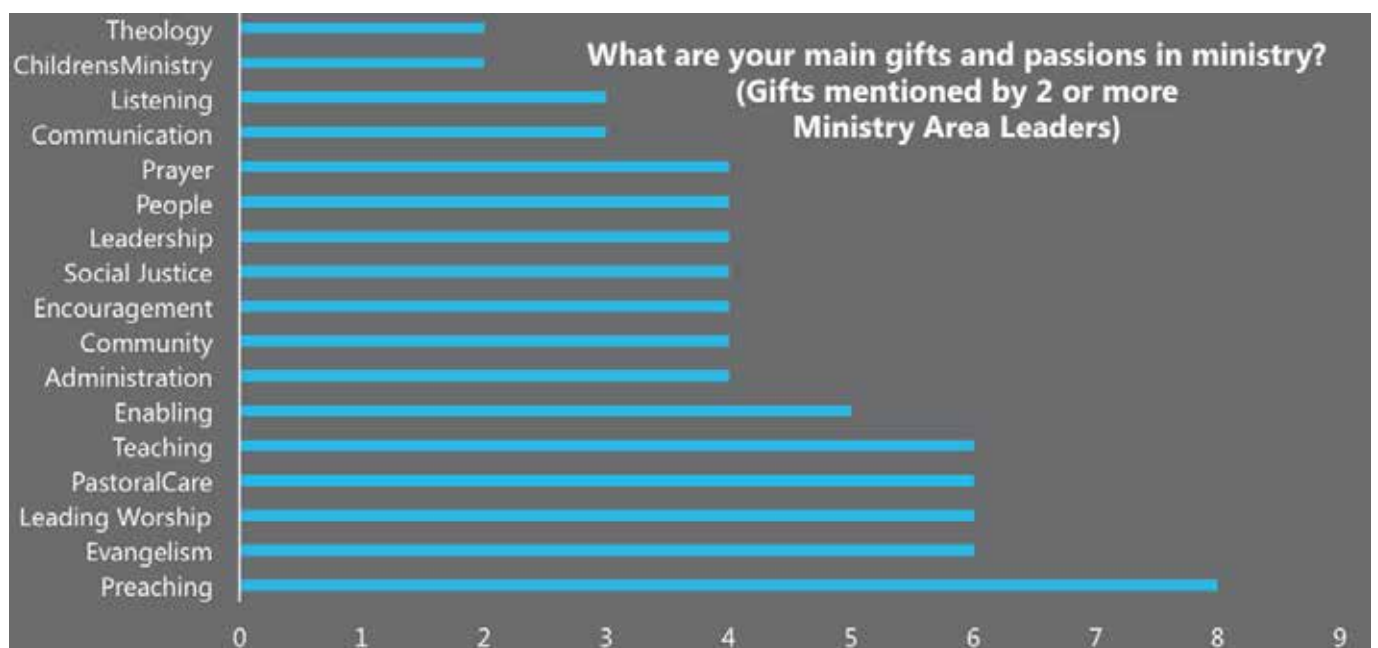
What are your main gifts and passions in ministry?

If you are or have been in secular employment, what areas have you worked in and what particular areas of expertise and experience can you offer in the church?

What hobbies and interests do you enjoy during your free time?

Is there anything you would like to do less of so that you can focus on the gifts God has given you?

Is there anything that you would like to do more of so that you can focus on the gifts God has given you?



By far and away the most frequent response to the question of what ministers would like to do less of was 'administration'. We must be cautious though before concluding that the instant remedy is to provide Ministry Area Leaders with administrative assistance. Is administration the real issue here or is there something else underlying the popularity of this response? When asked what they would like to do more of, many ministers named activities which are invisible but deeply significant – prayer and reflection, study, sermon preparation and simply being present with others. Ought we not therefore to encourage one another to take the time related to these often squeezed, but vitally important, things which bring us personal joy and nourishment, and which better equip us and sustain us in our ministries?

The breath-takingly, extensive list below is how Licensed Lay Ministers responded to the question of what areas they have previously worked in and what expertise and experience they could offer in the church. Surely there are major implications here for recognising and welcoming the vast array of gifting and experience with which God has blessed us as a church:

Accountancy	Disability Support (2)	Local Government (2)	Project Management (2)
Admin	Employment & Regulatory Law	Logic	Public Speaking
Administration	Engineering	Management (4)	Pupil Liaison
Advice	Equestrian	Management Consultancy	Purchasing
Analysis	Event Management	Mediator	Quality Management
Bereavement Support	Finance (4)	Medicine (2)	Retail
Careers	Food Hygiene	Mental Health	Royal Mail
Catering (3)	Fostering	Mental Health Social Work	Safeguarding
Change Management	Grants	Midwifery	Science (3)
Charity Director	Healthcare	Music Teaching	Seafarer
Charity Work	Horticulture	NHS	Senior Management
Citizens Advice	Hospitality	Nursing (6)	Special Educational Needs (2)
Committee Chair (3)	HR (2)	Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Teaching (18)
Communication (2)	Industry	Organisation (3)	Teamwork
Construction	IT (5)	Palliative Care	Technical Writing
Counsellor	Law (3)	Presentations	Technology
Culture Change	Libraries	Printing	Training (2)
Dairy Farming	Listening	Production	Understanding Dementia
Design			

One of the most inspirational findings of the Listening Days is the breadth of experience and gifting amongst licensed ministers in the Church in Wales today. The table above summarising professional skills and experience is a powerful expression of this.

As ministers we ought to worry less about those areas in which we personally lack experience or, and work as collaboratively as we can, drawing as much as we can on the wisdom and insights of our colleagues.

Theme 10: Resourcing for Ministry

How / where did you do your initial training for ministry?
What did you find helpful? What could be improved?
What specific training have you undertaken for your current role?
What did you find helpful? What could be improved?
What skills and resources do you need in order to better connect with your local context?
What training and resourcing would you like to request in relation to your current role?
How can the Church in Wales value and support non-stipendiary ministers?
How can the Church in Wales value and support curates and newly licensed lay ministers?

The information from the Listening Days on resourcing for ministry is enabling St Padarn's to better support people in their different ministry roles and specialisms.

How can the Church in Wales value and support curates and newly licenced lay ministers?

Responses to this question can be grouped as follows:

i. Choice of Training Incumbent / Supervisor

This was the most frequently mentioned issue for the respondents. Stressed was the importance of having **the right training incumbent** for the individual curate, and that the training incumbent is not only trained and experienced in active **listening, encouraging** and delivering **support**, but is also a role model for the curate or LLM. Regularly mentioned within this was the need for regular **one to one supervision** with the supervisor, and for **constructive feedback** to be given.

ii. External Support

There was also frequent mention of the need for newly licensed ministers to have someone **outside of their context** to support and guide them. Whether this is a **coach, mentor, pastoral supervisor** or **spiritual director**, having someone external who they can always talk to, who they can be **honest** with, who has the **time to listen** to them with **'awkward issues'** and can give them that space to reflect is vital.

iii. Individually tailored plans

Some felt strongly that curates should have less responsibility and not be treated as **'assistant vicars'**, whereas others stressed that they should be **fully involved** and that the vicar should **delegate** more to them. Ideally, an individually **tailored** plan can be created for each minister around **valuing** and using their **gifts** and making them feel very much part of **the team**. Mentioned within this theme was the need for clear **working agreements** to reflect this.

iv. Regular meetings with others

Both curates and lay licensed ministers talked about the importance and need for **regular meetings** with others in their role. Some mentioned that these **friendships** are a key support for them, whilst others said that this is a support mechanism that has been neglected over the past few years. It was said that having these **social/support groups** between newly licensed ministers and curates in different parishes is key in **tackling isolation**.

v. Training

A few people commented on the need for tailored initial training for ordination, with equally tailored support being available for supporting people through their curacies. Regular training courses that are locally based were asked for, along with training for training incumbents/supervisors and curates/LLMs with time off being allowed to attend training.

vi. Clearer objectives

The desire for agreed objectives for the role of curate / newly licensed lay ministers which are province-wide was expressed, to define clear and common expectations of the role.

vii. Time Off

Some respondents commented that newly licensed ministers should not be too busy as it is essential in the first years in licensed ministry to have ample time for reflection. Regular time away from the local context and time to 'be still' were mentioned as important.

viii. Financial support

The need for financial support in relation to people's ministerial development and retreats was also mentioned.

Support and Resourcing for Ministry/Mission Area Leaders?

While there was not a specific question on this topic, content analysis of responses from current MALs/incumbents highlights the following issues and themes:

General Observations

Our Dioceses are keen to improve training for Ministry Area Leaders, but there remains a general lack of understanding about what the role actually entails. Concern is expressed about how much is being expected of one person – typical observations included: ‘how can one person run 14 churches? It’s not humanly possible’ and ‘just give me one role please!’ For Ministry Area Leaders and Incumbents in this study, the best thing about both initial and role training has been the time for discussion and fellowship with their peers.

In common with curates, many MALs ask for specific training or resources/information on issues that are easily addressed. For each of the questions on resourcing, there were 3-4 topics or issues that were mentioned more than once. The first item in each list was the most frequently occurring.

Most helpful aspects of initial training?

- Training alongside others, the benefit of community and discussion with people of differing views and backgrounds
- Placement experience
- Tutors and supervisors who challenged me to think differently
- Grounding in scripture and theology

What could be improved about initial training?

- Needs to be flexible and designed to equip for roles which are realistic and well-defined
- Training needs to acknowledge our prior skills and experience
- More on the practicalities of actual ministry
- If trained elsewhere it is challenging to adjust to the culture of Church in Wales

Specific Role Training?

- ‘I haven’t had any’ / ‘I’ve had to make it up as I go along’ / ‘I’ve had to rely on my life experience’
- Diocesan MAL training was helpful

What was most helpful about role training?

- Discussion with peers
- Support and advice from training incumbent
- Help identifying my strengths and weaknesses

What could be improved about role training?

- More space for reflection, sharing good practice, sharing stories & issues with other MALs
- Training that is more specific to the role and context
- Training times need to be reconsidered
- Need for ongoing mentoring

Contextual skills needed?

- More time to just be present with people
- Digital Tech training (How do millennials work?!)
- Asset Based Community Development
- Leadership Training
- Help with recruitment of e.g. Youth Worker / Admin Assistant

Role Resourcing Needed

- A better understanding of the role of a MAL
- Help in connecting with my community
- Information on admin tools
- Time and diary management training
- Conflict and change management training
- Spirituality and liturgy
- Permission to fail

Voices (of Ministry / Mission Area Leaders):

"I have no job description and no support for my role as a Ministry Area Leader"

"As a Ministry Area Leader I don't actually have a job description. Plus I started from scratch with no support or other ministers in place. It would be better if there is already a core team in place before a Ministry Area is set up."

"Today we need to train for a very different style of ministry - our training patterns need to support this. We need to work to roles people will take up instead of the 'one style fits all' approach of past years."

It is perhaps unsurprising given the vast array of prior experience and learning amongst ministers in the Church in Wales that when we asked what kind of learning and resourcing people would value, the responses were many and varied!

St Padarn's, in partnership with the Dioceses, can use the data collected through the Listening Days exercise to inform its programme of training for the future.

Theme 11: Property

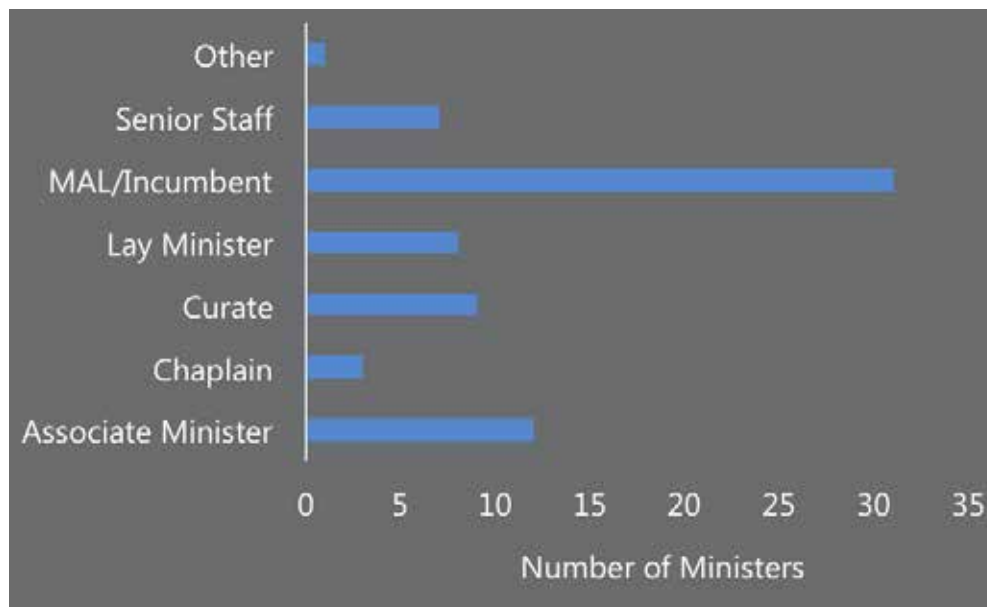
Do you live in a Vicarage belonging to the Church in Wales?

If you live in church-owned property, does this have an impact (positive or negative) on your wellbeing?

What ideas do you have to ensure that church buildings are not a burden on ministers but a resource for mission?

Do you live in a Vicarage belonging to the Church in Wales?

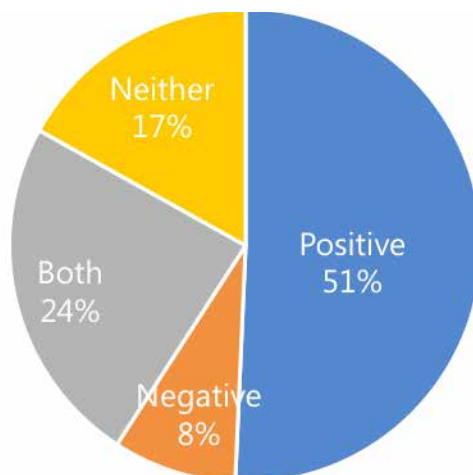
A total of 71/168 ministers said that they live in a Church in Wales property. Distribution among ministry roles is as follows (it is unusual for licensed lay ministers to live in church-owned property – this list includes some licensed lay ministers whose spouse is ordained).



Live with family	54
Live alone	11
Did not specify	6
	71

Positives	Negatives
Beautiful house	Coping with garden
Good to be present in community	Difficult to escape from work
Located away from church	Located next to church
Repairs done	Repairs not done
Support of Parsonage Board	Lack of support from Parsonage Board
Help with bills	Cost of heating
Dedicated study & meeting space	Study too cold to work in

If you live in church-owned property, does this have an impact on your wellbeing



It is noticeable that, for the majority of ministers, living in a church property has a positive impact – with just 8% describing the overall impact as negative. The table shows that features which one minister regards as a disadvantage can be perceived as an advantage for others, and that for every issue identified there tends to be a matching issue resolved! A number of ministers report that things were difficult for them in a previous house / diocese, but are now much better, and are grateful for the hard work of their Parsonage Board. Once again,

Voices (positives):

"I absolutely love my vicarage, the space and solitude it gives me."

"Yes, this has a really positive impact. Knowing that I can move between areas easily without having to worry about buying or selling a house, and that the house will be well maintained is lovely."

"Lovely house, lovely place, parsonage board fantastic"

"We live in a beautiful house and are profoundly grateful for the stewardship of it."

"Definitely - don't change this, or people will never move and there will be ever more priests living outside their communities, which is not a good thing."

Voices (negatives):

"Trying to cope with trees and a large garden front and back."

"I hate living in someone else's house! My house is lovely and we're settled there, but it's dependent on my job."

"It is a source of stress that I have to get on the housing ladder at maybe 65+."

"I really appreciate that I have a tied house to live in but the damp and cold, and lack of support for problems with it can impact on me and my family."

"It makes it very difficult to 'escape' from work and from some of the constant pressures of ministry."

"There is something about owning your own "home" which I would say does make a difference to your personal well-being and that of your family."

"We are well looked after in our diocese, but at the back of your mind, is always the fact that it is not yours. Although you know this as you enter ministry it over time becomes more of an anxiety."

concerns about retirement housing are articulated by many respondents (cf Theme 7: Finance).

What ideas do you have to ensure that church buildings are not a burden on ministers but a resource for mission?

The most common response to this question was that church buildings should be transformed into multi-purpose hubs for the local community. Along with the popularity of this suggestion, there was an awareness that such initiatives will require major investment of time and effort, finance and expertise.

Many stressed the need for support from outside the local church context, portfolio management of buildings and rationalisation. Current resourcing in relation to buildings clearly varies from Diocese to Diocese, but many respondents seemed to be unaware that significant investment and innovation of the kind proposed is already taking place at a provincial and diocesan level.

Others called for courage in closing buildings and rethinking our approach to mission.

See next page for some examples of responses to this question.

Sharing our own stories of how property is already being used effectively in mission can result in many other ministers and churches benefitting from our learning, practice and expertise.

Voices - What ideas do you have to ensure that church buildings are not a burden on ministers but a resource for mission?

Community Hubs...

"Remove pews. Pews freeze the building into only really being used in a particular way and for particular activities. In most cases they are modern (e.g. 1700 onwards)."

"Our church has been re-ordered and is beautiful. And warm with underfloor heating. And has a kitchen, meeting room, toilets. It has amazing acoustics for choral and instrumental music. The space is versatile with movable chairs to allow for conference, youth work, Christmas market and various other functions."

"Celtic evening praise preceded by hot chocolate seems to work a treat in the winter for one ancient building that brings community in!"

"This is so contextual. A place like Llantwit Major will always have national significance, and will always receive good local and national support."

Central Resourcing...

"Let all churches be taken under the complete care of the RB. So that it is the RB who is totally responsible for maintenance/management and redundancy. Support this financially by a levy on the Parish Share...almost a building rates payment. Release clergy and local congregations into Mission rather than making them custodians of the ancient buildings"

"Better central support on buildings and property management issues from people with expertise in this area. The recent appointment of a Diocesan Officer for this and the establishment of group to develop this role is a really positive step in the right direction."

"Thank you for simplifying the faculty application process - good move! Delegate the overview of church buildings to a central Diocesan team who arrange and respond to Quinquennial inspections. Also provide some serious support for those who are doing grant applications."

"Portfolio management of buildings - a buildings officer for each ministry area context supporting the use of buildings for mission seeing buildings as a resource for mission but not as the whole reality of the church"

"I think the dioceses need to invest in imaginative and very skilled surveyors / architects who have faith in spades (in both senses) and can think laterally about our buildings and convey a sense of excitement again to people locally about how precious the sacred space in their particular buildings is, rather than 'how they are and what they're used for in the present'."

Mothballs and Mission...

"Close them! Invest in usable, flexible, multi-purpose spaces that are in the right place. Stop being historic building managers."

"Make it easier to mothball church buildings with tiny congregations until a clear and missional purpose for them can be discerned."

"Start being honest about the value of church buildings to the true mission of the church. Stop making excuses. Be realistic about the amount of time you spend on the building compared to the amount 'going out and making disciples' and act appropriately as a result of that!!"

Theme 12: Reflections on St Padarn's

There was no specific Listening Day question which invited ministers to share their reflections on the work of St Padarn's, but we did find that there was frequent reference to the work of the Institute within the context of their responses to various questions. We include some of the voices here.

Change and innovation is always challenging and there must be a constant commitment to dare to try new things, to reflect on them, to hold onto what works and rethink what does not work. This is an ongoing commitment with St Padarn's – requiring a high degree of trust and commitment. There can be no guarantee that things will be 'right first time' so it is imperative that all who are ministers in the Church in Wales think in terms of 'our St Padarn's' – offering constructive feedback and encouragement along the way so that what is offered is the best it can possibly be.

Voices (thoughts on St Padarn's Institute):

"Continue the good work with developing St Padarn's and in providing high quality training for Lay Ministers."

"The Church in Wales seems to be doing an innovative job through St Padarn's"

"St Padarn's is greatly valued for the support and encouragement. After having trained in a different format 7 years ago, I value the way St Padarn's is encouraging, advising and leading us."

"I think things have changed because of the way St Padarn's has been established and is being run. It really is out there 'doing battle at ground level', something I am committed to. I can't praise their commitment, attitude and encouragement enough. I have been a Christian all my life yet this is the first time I feel the wider community is being seen as prospective members of our Christian community."

"Something that has encouraged me personally? Listening to more experienced clergy sharing what they have witnessed God doing over the years. The number of people training for a whole variety of ministries through St Padarn's."

"Continue to link us in to initiatives at St Padarn's. I appreciated receiving the prayer list for the year from St Padarn's. Also the chance to be involved in the Listening Day"

"Well done to St Padarn's for helping things get refreshed."

Voices (thoughts on the Listening Days):

"There are many problems and challenges facing us, but I still believe that this is the right place for me. I pray that you can help us overcome obstacles that get in the way of us growing."

"Thank you for asking me my opinion. Thank you for this Listening Day. I will not have another time out before Lent, you will not know how invaluable this has been."

"This has been a wonderfully constructed piece of research that has not felt like ticking boxes as some do but allowed for genuine exploration and pinpoint analysis, thank you."

"Cynicism is endemic in the Church in Wales. It's cool to be cynical. Leaders committing to change that culture will transform the Church."

"The Church in Wales has a historic role to share the love of Christ to God's people here. Following Saint David and the rest, we have something remarkable to offer, which can change our world, if only we let it."

Theme 13: Culture

Culture was a theme that was evident throughout the answers, regardless of role or diocese. Ministers often referred not only to practical changes needed to enable flourishing, but also a deeper change in culture which is needed right through the church – from attitudes of parishioners to change, to competitiveness between dioceses, and to a spirit of negativity amongst ministers.

'Culture eats strategy for breakfast' is a quotation attributed to the management consultant and educator Peter Drucker. This consultation has highlighted some of the many exciting developments currently being implemented across the dioceses, as well as some key aspects of supporting ministers that need to be addressed. But notwithstanding bold steps in strategy and addressing longstanding practical issues, if the culture permeating the church is one of negativity, competition or despair, it is unlikely that any of these measures will have a lasting effect.

"We but mirror the world. All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him. This is the divine mystery supreme. A wonderful thing it is and the source of our happiness. We need not wait to see what others do."

Mahatma Gandhi

6. Summary

What can be done to help ministers flourish?

Themes

- i. **Structural Issues.** Ministers talked about the layers of decision-making that can hinder their flourishing, as well as the need for more lay and youth participation in governing structures. Reference was made also to buildings, communication and training, with communication concerns ranging from the practical running of ministry areas to the simple expression of appreciation and support. Training needs were articulated in areas such as social media and management.
- ii. **Mission and Outreach.** Responses stressed that the flourishing of ministers relates to their connections with the local community and their engagement in mission. Seven participants observed that in order to flourish, we need to be bold in preaching the gospel in our churches and in the places where we live. There were calls for the development of services in response to local need, and for more mission-focused training.
- iii. **Support and Enabling.** We need to enable and equip lay ministers - this includes training and resourcing but also 'letting go' and delegation. The phrase 'protected time' was mentioned a few times – in relation both to weekly days off and a call to make regular retreats and time away mandatory. There were proposals to 'insist' on two days off a week and to monitor hours. A number of answers talked about encouraging more creative and 'outside the box' thinking. Gifts and prior experience must be recognised and released. There were requests for clearer job descriptions and realistic working agreements, but also phrases like 'release us' and 'trust us' which may point to more of a cultural challenge.

6. Conclusion

The vision of the Tyfu project is to contribute to the flourishing of every licensed minister in the Church in Wales.
"I have come that you may have life and have it to the full."

John 10.10

To collect data of the kind described in this report carries a significant responsibility – to honour, value and use well what has been shared.

Our prayer throughout the Listening Days project which we called 'Tyfu' is that we might pause from our bustling and busy-ness. To be present in Christ, and present to one another as his body, the church. In this reality we have all that we need. May we indeed love one another as Christ loves us.

But now thus says the Lord,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.

For I am the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.

Isaiah 43.1-3



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