THE POETRY OF PRIESTHOOD: A STUDY OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF POETRY TO THE CONTINUING MINISTERIAL EDUCATION OF CLERGY IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

by

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A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of DOCTOR OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

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November 2014

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APPENDICES - CHAPTER ONE

Appendix 1.1 An extract from *Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Regulations 2009*

PART IV

MINISTERIAL DEVELOPMENT REVIEW, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Ministerial development review and continuing ministerial education

Ministerial development review

18.—(1) Every diocesan bishop shall make, and keep under review, a scheme containing arrangements for a person nominated by him to conduct with each office holder in that diocese a review of his or her ministry to be known as a "ministerial development review" on at least one occasion in each period of two calendar years.
(2) The archbishop of each province shall arrange for every diocesan bishop in the province to undertake a ministerial development review and for his own ministerial development review on at least one occasion in each period of two calendar years.
(3) It shall be the duty of each office holder to co-operate in any ministerial development review undertaken under this regulation.
(4) The bishop or, as the case may be, the archbishop, shall have regard, in carrying out his functions under paragraphs (1) and (2) above, to guidance issued by the Archbishops' Council.
(5) The bishop or, as the case may be, the archbishop, shall keep a written record of the outcome of any ministerial development review and of any relevant matters relating to such a review, which shall be signed by the office holder and the person conducting the review.

Continuing ministerial education

19.—(1) Each office holder (other than an archbishop) shall be under a duty to participate in arrangements approved by the diocesan bishop or, in the case of a diocesan bishop, by the archbishop of the province concerned, as appropriate for the continuing ministerial education of that office holder.
(2) The bishop or, as the case may be, the archbishop, shall have regard, in carrying out his functions under paragraph (1) above of approving the arrangements referred to therein, to any guidance issued by the Archbishops' Council.
(3) Each archbishop shall make such arrangements as he thinks appropriate for his continuing ministerial education.
(4) Any diocesan bishop shall be under a duty to use all reasonable endeavours to ensure that every office holder in the diocese is afforded opportunities to participate in such education or training as is appropriate to promote that office holder's ministerial development.

Training

Holders of designated training posts

20.—(1) Every bishop of a diocese in which an office holder holds an office designated under regulation 29(1)(c) below as a training post shall make arrangements so as to ensure that any such officer holder is provided with suitable training and afforded such time off work as is necessary to undertake it.

(2) An office holder who holds an office referred to in paragraph (1) above shall be under a duty to use all reasonable endeavours to participate in and complete any training which is required to be provided to him or her under that paragraph.

Appendix 1.2 Birmingham Curates' Retreat, 17-20 January 2011

Description of event taken from Learning Journal:

Four days from 4pm Monday through to coffee on Thursday in a comfortable retreat house in rural Warwickshire.

There were 20 participants, all clergy in the first four years of ordained ministry working in a variety of contexts and out of a variety of liturgical and theological traditions. Participants were both women and men, Asian and African-Caribbean as well as white British, Stipendiary and SSM. Participation is an obligation for stipendiaries.

The Retreat is an established element in the CME 1-4 programme. It consists of a four-day time period with a variety of input and reflection: worship, personal prayer-time, addresses (usually by a visiting speaker – 'the retreat conductor'), conversation sessions, social time at the beginning and end of the retreat, and for the main part (Monday night through to before breakfast on Thursday) there is corporate silence, maintained to facilitate personal prayer and reflection. There is a craft room for those wishing to paint/draw/sculpt as a form of reflection, an opportunity for personal interviews with the retreat conductor, and also a talking room for group relaxation.

Retreat Conductor gives an introductory talk (setting out scheme for the retreat) plus two addresses on Tuesday and on Wednesday. One of the Bishops preaches at the concluding Eucharist on Thursday morning.

My involvement as CME Adviser:

My responsibility is to organise and support the Retreat, recruiting and briefing the speaker, leading worship and generally facilitating the event. The Director of Ordinands is also present to share in some of this work. After the 2010 retreat I decided to give the 2011 addresses myself. My motivation for this came from a sense that this was an opportunity for me to share some of my own insights which are relevant to this clergy group – with whom I interact closely. This also an outcome of a certain frustration on my part that the CME role is almost entirely facilitating the input of others, with very little direct input myself. Also DPT research has given me far more confidence that poetry can contribute helpfully to reflective practice among clergy, and that this could facilitate corporate learning and be tried out as a method or approach rather than simply as a matter of personal inclination on my part. It is significant to note however that several casual and very positive comments about the retreat from participants mentioned how stimulated they were to share in something that was important to me and about which I was 'passionate'. It would seem that the inter-personal dimension was a factor in the learning and reflection. Some others, who said they did not find poetry 'easy' commented that my enthusiasm for the subject area had encouraged them to persevere with material to which they were not immediately drawn. (*See more of participants' comments below*.)

In planning the retreat I worked with the existing pattern which had evolved over a considerable number of years. The Director of Ordinands took responsibility for the majority of planning and leading worship to give me more space for the delivery of the addresses.

Themes for the addresses arose from a range of inter-connected reflections and concerns:

- In wanted to facilitate the learning and reflection myself during the retreat this year, rather than inviting a visiting speaker, I found myself assuming that making use of poetry would be the approach I would take.
- Undergirding this is the sense that I have begun to establish a pattern of drawing on poetry as an instrument of reflection on ministry.
- This event would be a way of extending this pattern in seeing whether this approach might be useful for clergy in the early years of ordained ministry.
- I also wanted to offer the method as an approach which clergy might use for themselves in personal reflection or in facilitating the learning of others in groups or in preaching, so the sessions included an incremental Apology or rationale for the use of poetry in Christian learning and reflection.
- I had a store of poems which I have accumulated as relevant for reflection on Christian ministry and discipleship which I wanted to share with the CME 1-4 group – a group with whom I work closely over a 3-4 year period. I felt that these poems would enrich their individual spiritual lives and practice of ministry. Poetry also seemed to fit with the spirit and ethos of a Retreat.
- These poems have been garnered from personal reading, and most I have used to facilitate reflection with clergy and lay ministers during Quiet Days and talks to Clergy Chapter meetings. These experiences of using poetry with clergy have been very well received across a number of settings. This gave me confidence in taking a similar approach with the group.
- Some poems I used for the first time because they seemed particularly relevant to the CME 1-4 group, and I found this exciting and creative in having an opportunity to use 'new' material for the group, or existing material in new ways. The retreat felt like an opportunity for self-development and for reflection on practice.
- There was already an established approach or method to the way in which I used the poems to facilitate reflection on ministry (*see below*) which I could employ for the Retreat – one which felt authentic to my own approach to ministry and to reflection and prayer. This latter consideration seemed particularly important for the role of conducting a Retreat.

Method and approach:

This had evolved over a period of years as I have worked with groups of clergy and licensed lay ministers in their reflections on ministry – mainly in Chapter sessions, as well as with 'mixed' clergy-lay groups who are reflecting on Christian discipleship (parish Quiet Days, *Learning for Discipleship* courses).

Components to this approach are:

1. A commitment to reflective learning as an educational approach in which experience and reflection upon experience are fruitful. (*Theory supporting this*: Adult Ed. Theory, Theological Reflection theory, Christian Adult Ed. approaches)
2. Commitment to learning as a core activity and accepted 'good' integral to Christian discipleship.
3. Commitment to continued learning as a core activity of ministry – both in terms of the 'continuing studies in the support of on-going ministry' tradition of The Ordinal, and the more recent professional considerations of CPD/CMD associated with 'reflective practice' (Schön et al, C of E Hind reports.) This latter dimension has been

emphasised by the introduction of Common Tenure (refs) and the obligations of regular and whole-hearted participation in MDR and CMD.

4. The appropriateness of poetry as a tool for facilitating professional theological reflection on practice – an appropriateness which rests
   a) In established Hebrew-Christian tradition:
      i- poetry in Scripture
      ii- poetry in liturgical worship and devotion
      iii- and in Christian discipleship (tradition of Christian poets)
      iv- and in ministerial reflection on practice (Geo Herbert et al)
   b) Cultural tradition – Greco-Roman and Hebrew roots have given us poetry as a means of reflection on experience which is threaded throughout European and associated cultural history, and which is also borne out in other cultures – Islam, African, native/primitive etc.
   c) Tradition which is 'live' in a variety of groups, including marginalised or emerging groups/voices: women, Black voices within Christian community and beyond.
   d) The cultural popularity of poetry at present – poets in residence, featured in the media etc., and the intellectual emphasis on Imagination.
5. Yet the 'established' nature of poetry – for example, as a literary form 'taught' in schools – is also an inhibitor for some. The nature of the form, with its lack of definitive meaning and open-endedness – the very nature of its multivalency which is so appealing to some – can be a disincentive for others to consider poetry as a fruitful source of reflection and learning: "I don't do poetry", "I can't make head nor tail of poetry", "and Poetry doesn't make sense."
   To focus on poetry is to reinforce the logo-centric emphasis of Christian culture which may exclude or limit some learners, and yet simultaneously to dissent from the rational-technical culture of post-Enlightenment western epistemology, which may liberate others!
6. Poetry as a form seems to connect ideas, words, experiences, emotions in a creative and expressive way – poetic metaphor evokes images which are easily imagined by the reader/hearer, and which in turn release other ideas/emotions/memory of experience/fantasy – unleashing an economy of thought and emotion. Poetry as the verdant ground for reflection. Poetry as permissive.
7. In taking 'poetry' as a general form through which to approach reflection within a ministerial/discipleship learning situation, there is scope to draw on poems which are not explicitly theological or Christian, either in their inspiration, subject matter or intention. It is a way of learning from the world – in staying true to the form of poetry it is a way of extending material for reflection beyond Scripture and the realms of Christian orthodoxy into areas which may be hidden, risky or forbidden from an orthodox perspective – so 'God in nature' poems have in general a theological endorsement (e.g. pattern of the Psalms, which sees specific natural phenomena of weather, animals or terrain as dimensions of the creation and so as aspects of the work of the divine Creator) – but in 'using poetry' there can also be a tacit assumption that the marginalised experiences of women, of children, of the aged, of the depressed or unbelieving, can be of value. Poetry is the source of a range of perspectives and a route into a variety of human experience.

Selecting material for use in reflection:

Using poetry with different groups has given me a range of considerations to use in selecting and presenting material.

a. Who is in the group? What is the spectrum of Ministerial role, context of work, theological tradition, sex, ethnicity, educational background?
b. What are the potential concerns of the group?
c. What poems might be relevant to this group?
d. What material am I able to 'commend' in such a group? I.e. what poems are accessible for them, and explainable by me, within the constraints and opportunities of the event – its stated purpose and emphasis, as well as available time and physical setting e.g. A reflection session with clergy on a Quiet Day in Lent might focus on poetic material relating to the Passiontide-Easter season – poems that can be utilised for preaching and teaching as well as for reflection. A less specific meeting – e.g. a CMD session for clergy, would offer different emphases – such as poetry of place - the city, or rural etc.

Presentation of material:

I have evolved an approach to using poetry in reflection sessions:

1. Give a clear explanation of the approach that I am about to take: that I will be using poetry as way of reflecting on ministry/entering more deeply into the liturgical season/engaging with context etc.

2. Endorse this through
   a – emphasis on the role of poetry in Scripture and tradition
   b – suggestion that poetry gives routes into the theme or topic under consideration
   c – suggestion that poetry is a useful tool for theological and professional reflection
   d – recognising that for some this will not be an easy ride, but hoping that they will give it a try!

3. Follow a route which enables access to the poems. Always:
   3a photocopy for each participant a copy of each poem as it is addressed;
   3b set the poem within a narrative which gives the participants some knowledge about the poem before it is read:

   i- give some information on the author – name, dates, approach, allegiances (religious or otherwise), setting out of which they write, situation(s) which they address in the poem specifically or more generally.
   ii- in relation to above, give a summary of what the particular poem is saying – trace the journey of the poem
   iii- emphasize any particular significance or stance of the poem
   iv - indicate how this particularity connects with material or emphasis presented earlier – how it may differ or further develop ideas and approaches already introduced: this is building up the narrative which the poems introduce, which may not be a systematic thesis, but a range of ideas which may *cohere* through the poems and interpretations that they evoke.

   3c read the poem

3d explain any significant points in the poem – this may be

i- landmarks of meaning, reference, significance
ii- issues of difficulty or obscurity – including meanings which I myself cannot fathom.

3e invite questions of clarification about the poem

3f invite comments, reflections, personal or one-to-one/small group conversation on the poem

3g facilitate plenary discussion so that so the variety of the poem's meanings can emerge; also dissent from my own interpretation or the perceived meaning of the poem/intention of its author/authorial perspective; also the memories of experiences that the poem evokes in the audience, and the emotions it evokes.

3h read the poem a second or even third time to strengthen and embed meaning and reflection, giving participants the opportunity to 'hear it differently' in the light of the earlier conversation.

Poems used in sessions:

Session One: Poetry of The Passion.

Reflection on Mark's crucifixion narrative and Jesus' use of Psalm 22.

Session Two: Champagne every day – learning from artists and poets.

Terry Frost images - Black Sun, sun and waves: the painter who makes art out of his experience and his environment.

Mary Oliver – 'Love Sorrow' – the experience of profound grief

Les Murray – 'The Visitor'

Thomas Hardy – 'In Church'

Maya Angelou – 'Preacher don't send me'

William Blake – 'Garden of Love' – safeguarding the imagination

Session Three: Unbinding the briars: Priest as Poet.

Euros Bowen – 'Litter Stick' – poetry as paying attention creatively;

'Reredos' – Eucharist for the whole of creation

George Herbert – 'Aaron' – touching on the inner life of ministry

RS Thomas – 'Sick Visits' –

David Scott – 'For John Ball' – waiting as a model of ministry;

'Parish Visit' – reflecting on ministry

Rowan Williams – ‘Winterreise for Gillian Rose’ – reflecting on ministry

Session Four: Living as Praise: the Poet as Priest.

Geoffrey Hill – ‘Christmas Trees’ – Bonhoeffer poet-martyr as one who restores praise

Benjamin Zephaniah – ‘Soho Road’ - Poet as ‘Parson’ celebrating the local

Anne Stevenson – ‘A Prayer to Live with Real People’ - ditto

Mary Oliver - ‘Another Everyday Poem’ – Rejoicing in the ordinary.

Elizabeth Jennings – ‘Praises’ – Thankfulness for the ordinary

‘A View of Lazarus’ – Poet as imaginer of Scripture

Seamus Heaney – ‘Miracle’ – Poet as Interpreter of Scripture

Norman MacCaig – ‘In praise of a man’ – Poetry as lament; poet as eulogist

Maya Angelou – ‘Amazing Peace’ – Poet as Celebrant: one who connects with the popular calendar

Session Five: No secrets hidden: Poetry as Prayer.

Carol Ann Duffy - ‘Prayer’ – the cadence of liturgical prayer

George Herbert – ‘Prayer’

RS Thomas – ‘Sea Watching’, ‘The New Mariner’

Kathleen Raine – ‘Peace of Mind’

DH Lawrence – ‘Pax’

Christina Rossetti – ‘A Better Resurrection’

APPENDICES - CHAPTER TWO

Appendix 2.1 Reading ‘Aaron’: George Herbert (1974 [1633], 170)

Holiness on the head,
Light and perfection on the breast,
Harmonious bells below, raising the dead
To lead them unto life and rest.
Thus are true Aarons drest.

Profaneness in my head,
Defects and darkness in my breast,
A noise of passions ringing me for dead
Unto a place where is no rest,
Poor priest thus am I drest.

Only another head
I have, another heart and breast,
Another music, making live not dead,
Without whom I could have no rest:
In him I am well drest.

Christ is my only head,
My alone only heart and breast,
My only music, striking me ev’n dead;
That to the old man I may rest,
And be in him new drest.

So holy in my head,

Perfect and light in my dear breast,

My doctrine tun'd by Christ (who is not dead,

But lives in me while I do rest)

Come people; Aaron's drest.

CRITICAL INCIDENT REPORT

One of the most significant clergy CME events I organise through the year is the initial briefing for those about to become Training Incumbents for Curates. This is a three-hour meeting for experienced clergy about to undertake primary responsibility for the ministerial formation and training of a Curate in the first four years of ordained ministry. The format for the meeting is governed by a significant amount of detailed procedure concerning the training role, the diocesan training programme, as well as matters such as housing, evaluation and processes for discerning future deployment. Training in supervision skills takes place at a subsequent event. The tone of the meeting has been that of a 'briefing' – diocesan officials outlining policy and procedure, and participants asking questions of clarification (or making an assault on diocesan policy!)

At the 2008 briefing meeting, instead of the customary prayers to open the consultation, I decided to read the poem 'Aaron' by George Herbert (1593-1633) as a meditation to focus us on the task in hand.

I offered a brief interpretation of the poem: though patently a Seventeenth Century poem, not least in its assumptions about the sex of an Anglican priest, it may offer clergy some insights which resonate with contemporary experience as they reflect on ministerial role and identity. For example, the poem articulates anxiety about the priestly role as inhabited 'from the inside', and a sense of inadequacy as the priest considers the moral and spiritual expectations implied by the biblical model of the perfect ritual functionary. Herbert, far from articulating a calm and collected sense of self in the parson's role, speaks of a sense of dissonance and deficiency, of integrity challenged. I went on to ask if the poem suggests that confidence for the occupation of priest lies not so much in clerical status, nor in a set of skills, nor even in a sense of moral integrity, but arises from a theologically shaped identity which takes as its formational character the person (and priesthood) of Christ: 'Without whom I could have no rest; In him I am well drest.' The poet, reflecting on his sacred calling as priest, is seeking a vocational spirituality of ministry more than a certificate of competence.

My suggestion for the Training Incumbents was that Herbert's poem offered an approach which might resonate with our own sense of inadequacy at the prospect of the role before them, but also a culture in which spiritual formation for ministry might be fundamental for and integral to the formal expectations around ordained ministry which we were about to

consider. Herbert's poem says succinctly and powerfully that capacity for ordained priesthood is about character and vocation and spirituality.

The group had some brief conversation about aspects of the poem that occurred to them, and particularly that Herbert's surprising anxiety and sense of busyness resonated with how ministry feels today. There was a sense of appreciation that task and identity should be rooted in Christ. We then proceeded with the briefing. The next two hours contained some of the richest and most insightful work relating to ministry that I have shared in during my three years as clergy CME Adviser. I found confidence in my role to 'free up' from the procedural strait-jacket, and to integrate into the briefing theological reflection on aspects of the clergy role. Participants responded with their own reflections, and the rich diversity of theology which resources ministry in various contexts and traditions became apparent. The questions, comments and conversation among the participants were honest, searching and appreciative, and my sense was of genuine learning and mutual resourcing.

Why use a poem? The story in context

In planning the consultation I had not intended to read a poem. It seemed an impulsive response to the anxiety and consternation that some of the participants expressed when they arrived for the meeting and saw the hefty Training Incumbents' Handbook which sets out in considerable detail the official expectations and duties of the role. My memory of previous briefings I had facilitated was one of anxiety on the part of participants. It seemed that dissonance clergy may experience in their role surfaces when they encounter a situation in which they are invited to consider aspects of that role within an interpretative framework which they have not themselves chosen. Clergy can easily dismiss formalised expressions of professional responsibility as 'diocesan bureaucracy'; it may be that in encountering idealisations of clergy training, they feel under scrutiny and so react with defensive hostility. The use of the poem seemed to foster a different approach, one which was more participative, open and creative. In this group of clergy taking on the Training Incumbent role, of fourteen participants only one had any previous experience of the supervisory ministerial training role. The majority had significant experience of personnel management and training prior to ordination, but anxiety was as apparent as excitement at the prospect of becoming a Training Incumbent. Subsequent conversation suggested that the roots of this anxiety lay partly in that participants had themselves been trained under former 'apprenticeship' models, partly in low expectations of diocesan support for fulfilling the role, and significantly in their own uncertain identity as clergy: understandings of ministry are not easily articulated; they tend to be unsystematic, eclectic and tacit – an 'inhabited wisdom' not easily analysed or succinctly expressed as the tabular formulation of the Learning Outcomes suggest, something 'caught not taught'.

No written evaluation was requested from participants at this briefing, so I reflect on my own impressions and those of participants expressed to me verbally afterwards.

APPENDICES - CHAPTER THREE

Appendix 3.1 University Ethical Review Submission

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAMAPPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW

Who should use this form:

This form is to be completed by PIs or supervisors (for PGR student research) who have completed the University of Birmingham Ethical Review of Research Self - Assessment Form and have decided that further ethical review and approval is required before the commencement of a given Research Project.

Please be aware that all new research projects undertaken by postgraduate research (PGR) students first registered as from 1st September 2008 will be subject to the University's Ethical Review Process. PGR students first registered before 1st September 2008 should refer to their Department/School/College for further advice.

Researchers in the following categories are to use this form:

1. The project is to be conducted by:
    - staff of the University of Birmingham; or
    - a research postgraduate student enrolled at the University of Birmingham (to be completed by the student's supervisor);
2. The project is to be conducted at the University of Birmingham by visiting researchers.

Students undertaking undergraduate projects and taught postgraduates should refer to their Department/School for advice.

NOTES:

- Answers to questions must be entered in the space provided – the beginning of an answer field will be indicated by a grey bar ( ).
- Use the up and down arrow keys to move between answer fields; use the side scroll bar to navigate around the document.
- An electronic version of the completed form should be submitted to the Research Ethics Officer, at the following email address: aer-ethics@contacts.bham.ac.uk. Please **do not** submit paper copies.
- If, in any section, you find that you have insufficient space, or you wish to supply additional material not specifically requested by the form, please it in a separate file, clearly marked and attached to the submission email.
- If you have any queries about the form, please address them to the Research Ethics Team.

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW	*OFFICE USE ONLY:* Application No: Date Received:

1. TITLE OF PROJECT

The Poetry of Priesthood: Researching Clergy Continuing Ministerial Development (CMD) through a study of the role of poetry in Reflective Practice Groups.

2. THIS PROJECT IS:

University of Birmingham Staff Research project ☐
University of Birmingham Postgraduate Research (PGR) Student project ☒
Other ☐ (Please specify):

3. INVESTIGATORS

4.

a) PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS OR SUPERVISORS (FOR PGR STUDENT PROJECTS)

Name: Title / first name / family	Professor Stephen Pattison
Highest qualification & position held:	
School/Department	
Telephone:	
Email address:	

Name: Title / first name / family	
Highest qualification & position held:	
School/Department	
Telephone:	
Email address:	

b) PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF ANY CO-INVESTIGATORS OR CO-SUPERVISORS (FOR PGR STUDENT PROJECTS)

Name: Title / first name / family	Dr Alison LeCornu
Highest qualification & position held:	
School/Department	
Telephone:	
Email address:	

c) In the case of PGR student projects, please give details of the student

Name of	Robin Mark Pryce	Student No:	
Course of	Doctorate	Email	
Principal	Prof Stephen Pattison		

Name of student:		Student No:	
Course of study:		Email address:	
Principal supervisor:			

5. ESTIMATED START OF PROJECT Date:

ESTIMATED END OF PROJECT Date:

6. FUNDING

List the funding sources (including internal sources) and give the status of each source.

Funding Body	*Approved/Pending /To be submitted*
Funded by research student investigator from personal resources	

If applicable, please identify date within which the funding body requires acceptance of award:

Date:

If the funding body requires ethical review of the research proposal at application for funding please provide date of deadline for funding application:

Date:

7. SUMMARY OF PROJECT

Describe the purpose, background rationale for the proposed project, as well as the hypotheses/research questions to be examined and expected outcomes. This description should be in everyday language that is free from jargon. Please explain any technical terms or discipline-specific phrases.

The proposed research project is a qualitative empirical investigation into the role of poetry in clergy Continuing Ministerial Development in the Church of England.

As a research project undertaken for the Doctorate in Practical Theology it concerns two inter-related dimensions of professional practice: the study will be situated within the professional work of the research student as Clergy Continuing Ministerial Development Adviser in the diocese of Birmingham, and will undertake a critical reflection on his own practice and on the reflective practice of clergy colleagues with whom he works in that capacity. It will pursue this through a study of the function of poetry as a tool for reflective practice in small-group discussions of the experience and practice of ministry.

The project aims to generate a critical and nuanced understanding of the nature and potential of poetry as an heuristic device in reflective practice among clergy and to develop an associated methodology for the effective use of poetry in clergy CMD settings. This will enable a sustained practical theological reflection on the theory of professional development within the field of Clergy CMD in ways which refine and transform practice, relating these insights to the theory and practice of Christian adult education and to the broader domain of continuing professional development in other fields.

8. CONDUCT OF PROJECT

Please give a description of the research methodology that will be used

Methodology for the research is constructed within a Practical Theological framework, drawing on the insights and methods of the qualitative approach to social research in order to generate reflexive, critical, practice-based theological perspectives for the transformation of theory and practice of clergy CMD.

The investigation involves a broadly action-research and ethnographic approach to fieldwork with small groups of Anglican clergy, convened by the research student as facilitator-researcher, meeting regularly together over an agreed period of time to read pre-selected poems and reflect on them in the light of their our own personal experience of ministry.

Participants will be accessed through the Birmingham diocesan communication network and through CMD Officers in neighbouring dioceses. Data generated by these *Reflective Practice Poetry Groups* will be analysed to distil insights into the value of poetry as an heuristic tool for clergy reflective practice. It is envisaged that findings will inform the theory and practice of Christian discipleship formation more generally and also relate to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in other occupations.

The investigation will be conducted over a three-year period, from January 2012 to July 2014, within the University of Birmingham DPT programme.

9. DOES THE PROJECT INVOLVE PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE OTHER THAN THE RESEARCHERS AND SUPERVISORS?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Note:"Participation" includes both active participation (such as when participants take part in an interview) and cases where participants take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time (for example, in crowd behaviour research).

If you have answered NO please go to Section 18. If you have answered YES to this question please complete all the following sections.

10. PARTICIPANTS AS THE SUBJECTS OF THE RESEARCH

Describe the number of participants and important characteristics (such as age, gender, location, affiliation, level of fitness, intellectual ability etc.). Specify any inclusion/exclusion criteria to be used.

There will be 15-20 participants meeting in three/four Reflective Practice Poetry Groups.
All participants will be ordained clergy.
Three Reflective Practice Poetry Groups will be formed through clergy recruited from the diocese of Birmingham, and one group of clergy from a neighbouring diocese or dioceses.
Participants in both groups will include women and men who are in active ministry from a range of theological and church traditions and ministry contexts.

Curates in the diocese of Birmingham who are in the first three years of ordained ministry will be excluded from the study as these clergy are under an professional assessment process in which the research student has a key role. Curates who have been accredited (i.e. those in year 4 of ministry) will be eligible participants.

11. RECRUITMENT

Please state clearly how the participants will be identified, approached and recruited. Include any relationship between the investigator(s) and participant(s) (e.g. instructor-student

Note: Attach a copy of any poster(s), advertisement(s) or letter(s) to be used for recruitment.

Participants will be recruited through general advertisement via a general email advertisement to all clergy in the diocese of Birmingham, and through personal contact. Participants from other dioceses will be accessed through general email advertisement and through personal contact by the diocesan CMD Officer.

12. CONSENT

a) Describe the process that the investigator(s) will be using to obtain valid consent. If consent is not to be obtained explain why**.** If the participants are minors or for other reasons are not competent to consent, describe the proposed alternate source of consent, including any permission / information letter to be provided to the person(s) providing the consent.

The research project will be described to all potential participants through the Participant Information Sheet. All participants will be required to read and sign the Consent Form, and the graduate researcher will be personally available to respond to any queries relating to the content of these documents.

Note: Attach a copy of the Participant Information Sheet (if applicable), the Consent Form (if applicable), the content of any telephone script (if applicable) and any other material that will be used in the consent process.

b) Will the participants be deceived in any way about the purpose of the study? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

If yes, please describe the nature and extent of the deception involved. Include how and when the deception will be revealed, and who will administer this feedback.

N/A

13. PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Explain what feedback/ information will be provided to the participants after participation in the research. (For example, a more complete description of the purpose of the research, or access to the results of the research).

The action-research methodology of the Reflective Practice Poetry Groups allows for participant feedback on each session of the group and the summary of analysis which the researcher makes. Participants will be given the opportunity to comment on the method and analysis of the Reflective Practice Poetry Groups and the analysis of findings at the end of each series of sessions.

14. PARTICIPANT WITHDRAWAL

a) Describe how the participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the project.

The right to withdraw without penalty or censure is clearly stated in the Participation Information Sheet and Consent Form.

b) Explain any consequences for the participant of withdrawing from the study and indicate what will be done with the participant's data if they withdraw.

There are no consequences for a participant withdrawing from the study. Data relating to the participant will not be used in the study unless he or she explicitly gives approval for it to be used. Recorded data from Reflective Practice Groups will be kept securely on disc for 10 years and then destroyed. Paper data relating to participants who withdraw will be destroyed on withdrawal.

15. COMPENSATION

Will participants receive compensation for participation?

i) Financial ☐ ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

ii) Non-financial ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

If **Yes** to **either** i) or ii) above, please provide details.

Refreshments will be provided for participants, but no other form of compensation.

If participants choose to withdraw, how will you deal with compensation?

N/A

16. CONFIDENTIALITY

a) Will all participants be anonymous? **Yes** ☒ **No** ☐

b) Will all data be treated as confidential? **Yes** ☒ **No** ☐

Note: Participants' identity/data will be confidential if an assigned ID code or number is used, but it will not be anonymous. Anonymous data cannot be traced back to an individual participant.

Describe the procedures to be used to ensure anonymity of participants and/or confidentiality of data both during the conduct of the research and in the release of its findings.

Although this research is envisaged as a co-operative enterprise in which the contribution of participants is fundamental to the study, participants' identities will be protected so that they are free to engage in the research process without being personally identified. Confidentiality in the transcripts, analysis, thesis, and in dissemination of research findings is assured through identification of groups and individuals only by a system of alphabetical and number coding.
Whilst specific location of research into my own practice is inevitable, descriptions of participants will be of a general kind – e.g. 'a female priest in her 40s working in an outer-estate parish on the edge of a city'; 'a male priest in his 60's working in a united benefice of three suburban parishes.'

If participant anonymity or confidentiality is not appropriate to this research project, explain, providing details of how all participants will be advised of the fact that data will not be anonymous or confidential.

N/A

17. STORAGE, ACCESS AND DISPOSAL OF DATA

Describe what research data will be stored, where, for what period of time, the measures that will be put in place to ensure security of the data, who will have access to the data, and the method and timing of disposal of the data.

18. OTHER APPROVALS REQUIRED? e.g. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks

19.

☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ NOT APPLICABLE

If yes, please specify.

The graduate researcher has CRB clearance under his professional role as CMD Adviser.

20. SIGNIFICANCE/BENEFITS

Outline the potential significance and/or benefits of the research

Participants will benefit through an opportunity for reflective practice in mutually appreciative and supportive small-group environments, acquiring transferable skills in reflective methodology and an appropriate body of poetry through which to employ these skills personally and with others. The researchers will benefit through gaining insight into the theory and practice of CMD, evaluating practice methods, generating new approaches and enhancing professional expertise. The research will generate trans-disciplinary resources for the theory and practice of CMD and professional development more broadly, particularly through more effective methods for reading and interpreting poems as a means of reflection for individuals and groups. The research will contribute to the discourse in Practical Theology around the power of poetry and language to inspire and liberate individuals and communities.

19 RISKS

a) Outline any potential risks to **INDIVIDUALS**, including research staff, research participants, other individuals not involved in the research and the measures that will be taken to minimise any risks and the procedures to be adopted in the event of mishap

There are no physical risks to researchers or research participants. There are risks to the autonomy and subjectivity of the research participants who may be sharing personal and significant insights and experiences relating to the practice of ministry. The protocol for the Reflective Practice Poetry Groups will emphasize that participants may share freely without judgement or criticism by others; where emotional issues or personal difficulties arise for individuals there will be clear pastoral boundaries: Advisers for the pastoral care of clergy are available in each diocese, and emotional support of participants will be accessed through these skilled professionals, not through researchers or participants. There is also a risk to the personal identity and professional standing of the research student whose methods and approaches are the site of critical evaluation. Emotional support and professional guidance for him is accessible through diocesan support and line-management.

b) Outline any potential risks to **THE ENVIRONMENT and/or SOCIETY** and the measures that will be taken to minimise any risks and the procedures to be adopted in the event of mishap.

There are no risks to the environment or to society posed by this research.

20. ARE THERE ANY OTHER ETHICAL ISSUES RAISED BY THE RESEARCH?

Yes ☐ **No** ☒

If yes, please specify

CHECKLIST

Please mark if the study involves any of the following:

- Vulnerable groups, such as children and young people aged under 18 years, those with learning disability, or cognitive impairments ☐
- Research that induces or results in or causes anxiety, stress, pain or physical discomfort, or poses a risk of harm to participants (which is more than is expected from everyday life) ☐
- Risk to the personal safety of the researcher ☐
- Deception or research that is conducted without full and informed consent of the participants at time study is carried out ☐
- Administration of a chemical agent or vaccines or other substances (including vitamins or food substances) to human participants. ☐
- Production and/or use of genetically modified plants or microbes ☐
- Results that may have an adverse impact on the environment or food safety ☐
- Results that may be used to develop chemical or biological weapons ☐

Please check that the following documents are attached to your application.

	ATTACHED	NOT APPLICABLE
Recruitment advertisement	☒	☐
Participant information sheet	☒	☐
Consent form	☒	☐
Questionnaire	☒	☐
Interview Schedule	☒	☐

21. DECLARATION BY APPLICANTS

I submit this application on the basis that the information it contains is confidential and will b used by the University of Birmingham for the purposes of ethical review and monitoring of the research project described herein, and to satisfy reporting requirements to regulatory bodies. The information will not be used for any other purpose without my prior consent.

I declare that:

- The information in this form together with any accompanying information is complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.
- I undertake to abide by University Code of Conduct for Research (http://www.ppd.bham.ac.uk/policy/cop/code8.htm) alongside any other relevant professional bodies' codes of conduct and/or ethical guidelines.
- I will report any changes affecting the ethical aspects of the project to the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Officer.
- I will report any adverse or unforeseen events which occur to the relevant Ethics Committee via the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Officer.

Please now save your completed form, print a copy for your records, and then email a copy to the Research Ethics Officer, at aer-ethics@contacts.bham.ac.uk. As noted above, please do not submit a paper copy.

Appendix 3.2 Participant Information Sheet



'The Poetry of Priesthood' Research Project: Information for Participants.

1. Introduction:

As an ordained minister in the diocese of Birmingham with whom I work as Bishop's Adviser for Clergy CME…or As an ordained minister who participates in Continuing Ministerial Development…

You are being invited to take part in a research project I am conducting as part of my Doctorate in Practical Theology programme (DPT) in the University of Birmingham.

Before you decide whether you wish to participate in the study it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what will be involved. The following information is provided to help you. Please take time to read it carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like further information. You may take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

2. The purpose and design of this research:

Why is this research being undertaken?

A core component of the Birmingham DPT is for doctoral students to research their own professional practice. The research project takes one aspect of my work with clergy to consider what significance this has for the clergy involved, for my own work as clergy CME Adviser, and for Continuing Ministerial Development of Clergy in the Church of England more generally. In this sense the research is part of my own CMD and a contribution to the development of Practical Theology as a discipline for the critical analysis and development of professional education.

What is the purpose of researching reflective practice among clergy?

As CME Adviser I regularly use poetry as a tool to help clergy reflect on ministry. The research aims to study how reflecting on ministry through poetry affects our practice, ministerial identity and sense of self, spirituality, relationships with God, colleagues, parishioners, etc.. By generating rich and multi-dimensional reflection on the role of poetry in the reflective practice groups I hope to analyse the data to distil some wisdom on what poetry offers us as clergy in our on-going development in ministry.

Why have I been asked to participate?

You are invited to participate in the research because you are an ordained minister in the diocese of Birmingham with whom I work in my capacity as Bishop's Adviser for Clergy CME, or an ordained minister in another diocese who is engaged in reflective practice as part of CMD.

What would be involved if I decided to take part?

The particular study in which you are invited to participate concerns the potential of poetry to foster reflective practice in ordained ministers. It will involve small groups of clergy, convened by myself as facilitator-researcher, meeting regularly together over an agreed period of time to read pre-selected poems and reflect on them in the light of our personal experience of ministry. These groups will be

called *Reflective Practice Poetry Groups*. Conversation within the groups will be recorded, transcribed, analysed and published.

How will the Reflective Practice Poetry Groups work?

The groups will comprise of 5-6 members, including myself. A second researcher may be present in some groups to help in gathering data.

The initial group session will be one hour and a half in duration; each subsequent session will last for not more than one hour.

Groups are asked to meet five times, at regular intervals. You are asked to commit to all five sessions.

Some group sessions will take place during a single day; others will meet at regular intervals.

A process for the group work will be introduced, and ground rules for the conversations will be agreed, particularly in relation to confidentiality and to respectful listening of insights and opinions shared.

During the sessions, data will be collected by recording the conversation and by the researcher(s) making notes.

At the conclusion of every session, each participant will be invited to give a brief summary of any particular insights, learning or issues which may have occurred during the conversation.

What will be the role of the researcher?

My own role within the group will be as a facilitator-researcher, not as an 'objective' analyst or monitor: there are no right or wrong answers – all contributions are valuable, and I expect to learn from your insights and to share my own as we read the poems together and reflect on them in conversation as ministerial colleagues.

Will there be involvement beyond the group sessions?

Participants will be invited to complete an initial Questionnaire.

As a follow-up to the groups, all participants will be asked to reflect further on the poems and the reflective practice process through a second Questionnaire.

Some participants will be invited to contribute further through a semi-structured one-to-one interview with the researcher or research assistant.

I shall also be reflecting on the groups and the impact that the poems and the reflective practice conversations have on me. Participants will be invited to meet again after the group sessions have finished, to reflect and comment on my analysis of the data generated in our conversations.

Editorial control of the research material remains the sole responsibility of the researchers at all times.

3. Confidentiality and Consent:

Will my views and the views of other participants be kept confidential?

I am aware that information collected during this kind of research can be sensitive. What you say or write will be treated in confidence, accessed only by myself as researcher and used only for the purposes of the study. This includes sharing data with my Research Supervisors and in academic seminars. It may also be published in academic journals.

Any information relating to the personal or professional life of participants to which the researcher becomes privy in the course of the research will not be disclosed to any third party and will not be used in any way that might impact on future deployment within the diocese or beyond (excepting information of a criminal nature which the researcher is legally bound to disclose to the appropriate authority).

You will be asked to keep the comments and reflections of fellow group participants confidential.

Any data quoted in my subsequent thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham, in academic presentations and publications, will be anonymised so that no reader will be able to identify participants and their personal contributions.

What about my consent to participate?

Only ordained ministers of the Church of England in active ministry will be invited to participate. Clergy in their first three years of ministry (i.e. Curates not yet eligible for Common Tenure posts) will not be included. Before participation takes place you will be asked to sign a consent form. Participation is entirely voluntary.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

Whether or not to participate is entirely your decision, and that decision is confidential. The research is not an official project of the diocese of Birmingham or Church of England; there are no negative repercussions if you decline the invitation or change your mind.

You can withdraw from the study at any time prior to participation without giving a reason by contacting the researcher: . If you wish to withdraw after having participated in a part of the research you may do so at any time by contacting the researcher, but there are limits on the use of material you have contributed (please see below.)

If I withdraw, what happens to any data I have contributed to the study?

All research data generated in group discussions and interviews in which you have shared will be used in the research analysis. There is an initial cooling off period of one week from point of research, after which the data will be used in the research process. To request withdrawal of data before this deadline please contact the researcher: .

In compliance with University of Birmingham regulations all recordings of reflection groups and one-to-one interview material will be stored securely and confidentially for 10 years and then destroyed.

4. Presentation of research findings:

Will the outcome of the research be published?

The final outcome will be presented initially in the form of a written thesis to the University of Birmingham. There will be a shorter summary made available to all participants. This will also be available to relevant individuals and groups (e.g. Clergy CMD Officers in other dioceses.)

In addition the research findings may be presented to CMD colleagues at conferences, and will be the basis for academic journal articles and presentations in the field of Practical Theology and Professional Development.

Will I be able to comment on the completed research?

My intention is to share the completed research findings with you through a conference for participants, and to ask for your comments.

However, your name will not be associated with research findings in any way, and your identity as a participant will be known only to the researchers and, of course, your fellow group participants.

5. Risks and opportunities associated with this study:

There are no personal health or safety risks associated with this study. If you find that reflecting on a particular dimension of ministry raises personal issues for you, pastoral care and counselling is available from the Bishop's Adviser in Pastoral Care for Clergy & Clergy Families:

.

The expected benefits associated with your participation are that you will have quality time reflecting on poems, be able to listen to clergy colleagues and hear how they relate their experiences of ministry through reflection on poetry, as well as participating fully yourself and receiving responses from group members to your contributions. It is hoped that your participation in this conversation will be an encouragement to you, and one that deepens your understanding of Christian faith, increases self-knowledge and offers insight into your own practice and the practice of ministry more generally within the Church of England.

6. Validation:

Who is supervising the research project?

The research is being conducted under the supervision of:

Professor Stephen Pattison

Department of Theology & Religion, University of Birmingham, B15 2TT.

Dr Alison LeCornu

To access the University of Birmingham's *Code of Practice for Research* see:
http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/COP_Research.pdf

What if something goes wrong?

If you want to make a complaint about the conduct of this research you should contact these Research Supervisors.

7. Need to know further information?

If you require any further information or clarification please contact me and I will do best to any questions or concerns you may have.

The Reverend Canon (Robin) Mark Pryce

Appendix 3.3 Schedule of poems introduced into RPPGs

R.S. Thomas, ‘Sick Visits’.	4 sessions:	A1, B1, C1, D1
Manon Ceridwen James, ‘A Priest at a Funeral’.	2 sessions:	C2, D2 [not A or B]
Benjamin Zephaniah, ‘Soho Road’.	3 sessions:	A2, B2, D3 [not C]
Anne Stevenson, ‘A Prayer to Live with Real People’.	3 sessions:	A3, B3, C3 [not D]
Thomas Hardy, ‘In Church’.	4 sessions:	A4, B5, C5, D5
Les Murray, ‘Visitor’.	4 sessions:	A5, B4, C4, D4

3.3i Sick Visits

R.S. Thomas

The Echoes Return Slow. 1988, London: Macmillan.

3.3ii A Priest at a Funeral

Manon Ceridwen James

http://manonceridwen.wordpress.com/category/poems

3.3iii Soho Road Then and Now

Benjamin Zephaniah

https://www.facebook.com/257911007594452/photos/a.257973060921580.81160.257911007594452/595443250507891/?type=1&permPage=1

3.3iv A Prayer to Live with Real People

Anne Stevenson
The Fiction-Makers. 1985, Oxford: OUP.

3.3v In Church

‘And now to God the Father,’ he ends,
And his voice thrills up to the topmost tiles:
Each listener chokes as he bows and bends,
And emotion pervades the crowded aisles.
Then the preacher glides to the vestry-door,
And shuts it, and thinks he is seen no more.

The door swings softly ajar meanwhile,
And a pupil of his in the Bible class,
Who adores him as one without gloss or guile,
Sees her idol stand with a satisfied smile
And re-enact at the vestry-glass
Each pulpit gesture in deft dumb-show
That had moved the congregation so.

Thomas Hardy

Thomas Hardy: Selected Poems. 1978, London: Penguin.

3.3vi Visitor

Les Murray

Poems the Size of Photographs. 2002, Manchester: Carcanet.

Appendix 3.4 Protocol for the Reflective Practice Poetry Groups

1. Welcome and Introductions: MP and ALL - Name, ministerial appointment/role.

2. Summary of Research purpose, and renewed commitment to Group Covenant: MP

MP reminds participants of the purpose of the research, and the Group Covenant (established in week 1) which guides conduct and obligates participants to confidentiality regarding any material shared within the group sessions.

3. Introducing the poem: MP

MP hands out to all participants a text of the poem for this session.

MP reads the poem.

MP gives a brief commentary on the poem – details of its author, a suggestive interpretation of its subject, inviting any immediate clarifications of meaning from participants.

Then MP reads the poem a second time.

Then MP facilitates an unstructured guided reflection on the poem by asking questions to evoke participants' responses to the poem – its language, subject, approach, implicit theology/ideology/ethics, perceived relevance to ministry, or perceived obscurity/ misapprehension. The questions will depend on the particular poem and participants' responses, e.g.:

4. Questions to animate reflection and discussion on the poem: MP

Q: What does this poem say to you?

Q: Which parts of the poem resonate with your experience?

Q: Are there aspects of the poem that remain hidden or obscure?

Q: What dimension(s) of your ministerial experience are touched by the poem?

Q: Which phrases or words in the poem are particularly powerful for you?

Q: Are there things you want to consider further or do differently as a response to reading this poem?

Q: Can you say in particular what it is about the poem which has inspired that?

5. After 50 minutes of conversation MP will bring the discussion to a conclusion, and invite participants to reflect on the process of reflecting on the poem.

Q: What image or metaphor or phrase would you use to sum up what the poem has stimulated in you today?

6. Participants have a few minutes to reflect in silence, and are then invited to share any response they may want to give.

7. MP concludes session with thanks – reminder of date for next time.

Appendix 3.5 Summary of RPPGs from Research Journal

This summary of RPPGs gives details of participants and processes extracted from the Research Journal and Initial Questionnaire (IQ), showing range of participants and pre-existing approaches to poetry and to CME.

3.5i Summary of RPPG A

A1 Recruitment for RPPG A

Recruitment was based on the material I had prepared to promote the research project – both the advertisement on Birmingham diocesan website, and the Participant Information pack. I approached a number of clergy colleagues who had shown interest in the development of my research since I joined the DPT programme, including those who participate in a group for researching clergy called Round Table Theology, and others who were engaged in part-time studies, with information about the project when this became available. Four of these volunteered to be participants in the first group.

A2 Profile of participants for RPPG A

A2.1 Personal and professional profile

RPPG A comprised four clergy participants all serving in Birmingham Diocese. Two men – John in early 30s and Matthew aged 60; two women, Michaela in early 30s and Shirley mid-50s. All were white (though one participant declined to self-designate ethnicity when responding to the initial questionnaire).

Three were Incumbents of parishes (John, Matthew and Michaela); John and Michaela had served five-and-a-half years in their current post, Matthew had served twenty-one years consistently as Incumbent in the same parish. All were in their first post since Curacy. Shirley had served as a diocesan officer for seven-and-a-half years. One Incumbent served in an inner-urban parish, and two in a context which they designated “outer-urban” (rather than “outer estate”, the description used on the questionnaire). The diocesan officer was not located to any particular parish and worked across all diocesan contexts and traditions. In terms of church tradition within the C of E, John, Matthew and Michaela self-designated as Catholic, and Shirley – the diocesan officer – declined to give any details of this aspect of professional identity.

John and Michaela had been in ordained ministry for ten years, and ordained ministry was their first and only profession after university and full-time residential theological training. Shirley had been in ordained ministry twelve years; prior to ordination she had substantial experience as a licensed Lay Evangelist before part-time non-residential training. The longer-serving priest Matthew had been in holy orders twenty-seven years, and had worked as a professional translator before full-time residential training for ordination.

Other relevant factors not emerging from the Questionnaire, but known to me either from my professional knowledge of participants or emerging through conversation, include John and Michaela being a married couple – both Incumbents in separate, neighbouring parishes.

It was their house in which RPPG A met for all its sessions for convenience . The parishes in which John and Matthew served were in a formal collaborative "mission partnership", so their working relationship was close. Parish priest Michaela had developed a close link between the parish and The Queens Foundation Birmingham for training ordinands in inner-urban mission and ministry.

At the time of the group sessions and interview however, she was still working as a full-time parish priest.

All participants were well-known to me in my professional capacity as CME Officer in the diocese through a number of connections (e.g. arranging sabbaticals, study programmes, and training for their particular roles). Shirley is a colleague within the diocesan staff. We were also familiar, to a greater or lesser degree, on a social basis.

A2.2 Participants' personal approaches to CMD (as expressed in IQ)

The Initial Questionnaire enabled participants to consider, albeit swiftly, their current experiences of and preferences for CME in terms of what methods they engage for continuing study and reflection. Participants in RPPG A expressed a preference for reflective CME done in conversation with others – colleagues and Spiritual Director.

A2.3 Participants' individual relationship to poetry (as expressed in IQ)

Participants express appreciation of poetry as a source of personal inspiration for themselves, and were conscious of the place of poetry in Scripture and in liturgy for public worship and private devotion. All state that they use poetry in different ways in the practice of ministry. An interesting theme emerges concerning poetry as a *shared experience*, not just private reading, and one which is performed, heard and appreciated in drama and in small-group teaching and reflection.

A3 Profile of process for RPPG A

A3.1 Dates, Times and Locations of sessions

The group met for five sessions, all of which were held in the sitting room of John's vicarage, the family home shared with Michaela. Dates and times of the sessions had been arranged by mutual agreement between me and the group participants. They took place in July and August 2012, on the following dates during the times stated below. The sessions followed the protocol I had prepared. Session 1 was longer that the others in order to induct participants into the process of the research and their part in it. The initial session was an hour-and-a-half to give sufficient time for preliminary introduction to the research:

Session 1 7.30-9.00pm, Sunday 2012;

then two sessions during the same evening, one immediately following the other after a short break:

Session 2 7.50-8.50pm and

Session 3 9.15-10.15pm, Sunday 2012;

then finally two consecutive sessions on the same evening, with a short interval:

Session 4 7.45-8.45pm and

Session 5 9.00-10.00pm, on Monday 2012.

Participation in the group was sustained across all five sessions, though one participant was absent for most of session four due to a travel delay, otherwise there were no absences.

A3.2 Neutral Observer

The Neutral Observer was present in all five sessions and took notes by hand which were not disclosed to me or to the participants.

A3.3 Group Process

I followed the scheme I had prepared for the groups set out in the protocol (Appendix 3.4).

A3.4 Data recording and transcription

The group conversations were recorded on digital recorder and by hand in a notebook, the audio-file transferred to PC and for secure storage on the diocesan server, and transcribed as soon as practicable after the event by the researcher, usually within twenty-four hours. I also made detailed notes of the flow of the dialogue by hand, also detailing any significant contributions or any dialogue, body language or other interactions within the group which were critical. I also made notes of my own feelings and immediate responses during the sessions.

I found that on occasions where spoken dialogue was too fast for easy audibility, or where an individual contribution was muffled, the hand-written notes were invaluable in helping me interpret indistinct dialogue sound on the data-recorder. Furthermore, hand-written notes contain detail of body-language or tone of voice – and although these are, of course, my own personal impressions they have been valuable in contributing towards the production of transcripts which are not only verbatim accounts of conversation, but give a sense of the drama and dynamics which contribute towards a sense of the meaning and intent of the conversation – dimensions of the event which are very valuable alongside the recorded words for further analysis and reflection.

I also made notes before and after each session – either directly on to my personal PC, or in a fieldwork notebook. These record my feelings and insights prior to each session, and my immediate responses to the group sessions as facilitator-researcher each time they had concluded. These notes are consistent in registering the demanding task of being participant-observer in the particular context of researching my own practice: for example, paying profound attention to conversations between participants in order to foster shared insight and deepening group process is regularly part of my CME role, but the work of recording and the reflexivity which that activity introduces through the decision-making

process of what to record and how to describe what is recorded – the double role is physically and mentally exhausting.

A4 Poems

Poems used in RPPG A were drawn from the pool of poems that I use regularly with clergy groups. I introduced them into the research process because I had the sense that my practice could gain from a greater and more critical understanding of what these poems offer or frustrate in terms of reflection on practice and ministerial development.

Session 1 R.S. Thomas, 'Sick Visits';

Session 2 Benjamin Zephaniah, 'Soho Road';

Session 3 Anne Stevenson, 'A Prayer to Live with Real People';

Session 4 Thomas Hardy, 'In Church';

Session 5 Les Murray, 'Visitor'.

3.5ii Summary of RPPG B

B1 Recruitment for RPPG B

In addition to posting the advertisement on Birmingham diocesan website, I drew the attention of some individuals to the research project by sending them a copy of the Participant Information pack by email or offering one in person as I encountered them at diocesan meetings and CME events. My approach was to disseminate information about the research among my clergy colleagues as a CME opportunity rather than to recruit participant categories strategically, and in this way potential participants for future groups began to accumulate as RPPG A was underway. In contrast with arrangements for RPPG A, where I negotiated dates and times with participants, in order to give greater intervals between sessions for the research purposes outlined above, I designated in my own diary five specific Tuesday afternoons once per month during autumn 2012 and January 2013 as time for RPPG B sessions, and recruited on this basis. Though I was careful to avoid holidays and the run-up to major festivals, especially Christmas and New Year, a common response from some clergy was that they were interested in the opportunity but felt that they did not have sufficient time to commit to a five-session programme over an extended period. This may indeed be about pressure of work, but may also indicate that some clergy have a sense of participation in CME as an additional demand on time and energy rather than an integral part of their ministerial vocation and work, which may have a further implication that for CME to be deemed valuable among some clergy it needs to be immediately and evidently relevant to current tasks or concerns. To adapt Auden's famous adage, poetry *makes nothing happen*! One priest contacted me to say that she wished me well with the research but would not be able to participate because poetry was 'not her thing'. However, I include these deflationary experiences to give a flavour of the somewhat chequered experience of recruiting participants for the research, and as a prelude to commenting that this mirrors my experience of recruiting for CME programmes more generally: the candidates trickle through

rather than pour in torrents. Overall I did not find major difficulty in attracting five clergy to commit to the programme of sessions for RPPG B.

B2 Profile of participants for RPPG B

B2.1 Personal and professional profile

RPPG B comprised five clergy, all serving in Birmingham Diocese; three men – Peter in his forties, Gary in his fifties, and Rick in his late sixties who took planned retirement from his suburban parish during the course of the research group. Of the women clergy, Janet was in her fifties and Cath in her sixties. All were white British in ethnic origin.

Four were Incumbents of parishes (three men Peter, Gary and Rick, one woman Janet) designated as outer-estate, rural, and two were suburban. Three Incumbents had served fewer than five years in their current post (the first post since Curacy), and Rick had served forty years in a range of parishes across Birmingham. The remaining woman priest Cath was part-time Chaplain in an inner-urban Community Centre and attached to a suburban parish as an associate priest on a self-supporting basis;

In terms of church tradition, Rick self-designated as Anglo-Catholic, Peter as Charismatic Catholic, and Gary and Janet as Central. Cath declined to identify with an ecclesial tradition (the SSM Community Chaplain). Previous careers included Rick – Librarian (MA English); Cath – Teacher; Peter – Energy Industry Executive (MSc Maths & Logic); Janet – Lay Chaplain (OU humanities degree); and Gary – senior officer in the Armed Forces.

Four participants were well-known to me in my professional capacity as CME Officer in the diocese through a number of connections: I had been responsible for organising the IME of two participants during their time as Curates, and Gary was a Training Incumbent of a Curate with whom I had extended contact during the training period for this role. None of them were people I had contact with on a personal, social basis. Three participants work in close geographical proximity to one another and would seem to have undertaken some mutual recruiting – Rick, Gary and Janet; one of them, participant Janet, offered to host the group in her home, and to provide lunch for participants before each session.

B2.2 Participants' personal approaches to CMD (as expressed in IQ)

Participants in RPPG B expressed a preference for reflective CMD pursued through personal reading and also in conversation with others such as colleagues, Spiritual Director, a particular Christian fellowship. Two mention that conferences and courses play a part in CME.

B2.3 Participants' individual relationship to poetry (as expressed in IQ)

The responses of all participants suggest a conscious of the place of poetry in Scripture and in liturgy – they identify passages and poetic language that has particular significance for them - and all say that they use poetry in the course of their ministry to a greater or lesser degree. Four participants express appreciation of poetry as a source of personal inspiration for themselves, and name favourite poems and poets; one says that she has

minimal personal contact with poetry and is unable to designate any poet or poems as particularly meaningful for her. In contrast the Chaplain demonstrates that she has a love of poetry, writes some herself, and mentions that she displays poetry on notice boards in the community centre "as on London Tube" . One participant comments that for him poetry is best as a *collaborative enterprise*, similar to a comment in RPPG A:

> Peter: "I enjoyed reading poetry at school, but limited exposure since. Generally I need the enthusiasm of others before I can engage with poetry. I have recently completed Dante's *Divine Comedy* (in English!)".

B3 <u>Profile of process for RPPG B</u>

B3.1 <u>Dates, Times and Locations of sessions</u>

The group met for five sessions, all of which were held in the sitting room of Janet's Vicarage on an outer estate in East Birmingham. They took place between September 2012 and January 2013 on the following dates during the times stated below. The sessions followed the same protocol as for RPPG A, with the addition of a reflection period at the beginning of sessions 2, 3, 4 and 5. Session 1 was longer than the others in order to induct participants into the process of the research and their part in it.

Session 1 1.30-3.00pm Tuesday , 2012;

Session 2 1.55-3.00pm Tuesday , 2012;

Session 3 1.30-2.30pm Tuesday , 2012;

Session 4 1.30-2.30pm Tuesday , 2012;

Session 5 1.45-2.45pm Tuesday , 2013.

Participation in the group was sustained by all members across all five sessions. The sessions were preceded by an informal bread and soup lunch each time, provided by Janet and her retired husband. This is something Janet offered to do as an expression of hospitality, and it served to build a sense of community among participants. The only draw-back was that on a few occasions lunch overran slightly, so that the start of group sessions was delayed. An advantage was that I was able to gauge the feelings of participants during this social time prior to the group sessions proper, and they provided a space in which to talk over the big issues of that period, which were to do with General Synod and the failure to progress the legislation for women bishops. My field notes record that this was by far the dominant topic of conversation for most lunches, but it was never raised in the group sessions proper. Neither was material shared in any of the sessions mentioned over lunch.

B3.2 <u>Neutral Observer</u>

The Neutral Observer was present in all five sessions and took notes by hand which were not disclosed to me or to the participants, as in RPPG A.

B3.3 Group Process

I followed the scheme I had prepared for the groups set out in the protocol (Appendix 3.4).

B3.4 Data recording and transcription

A minor technical change for RPPG B was that group conversations were recorded directly on to my laptop PC rather than using a separate digital recorder. The quality of recording was good. Audibility in the sitting room was good and I arranged the room in advance of the meetings each time so that I had mutual eye-contact with every participant. I also took detailed notes of the conversation by hand in a notebook, which also noted mood of the group and non-verbal characteristics of the interaction. I transcribed these data as soon as practicable after the event, usually within twenty-four hours.

B4 Poems

Poems used in RPPG B were identical to those used in RPPG A, with the exception of Session 4 for which participants were invited to bring a poem of their own choosing. Copies of the poem used in Session A4, Les Murray's poem 'Visitor', were available in case a participant should not have a poem to share in the group, but this was unnecessary in the event. I anticipated that reflecting on the same poems in both groups would enable me to draw comparisons between them. In addition, my expectation was that accumulating further individual and group responses to the poems would be 'a deepening' of my critical appreciation of each poem (Steiner 1997, 22).

Session 1 R.S. Thomas, 'Sick Visits';

Session 2 Benjamin Zephaniah, 'Soho Road';

Session 3 Anne Stevenson, 'A Prayer to Live with Real People';

Session 4 Participants' choice of poems (see below);

Session 5 Thomas Hardy, 'In Church'.

In session 4 the following poems were presented by participants:

Janet: 'The Road Less Taken' by Robert Frost.

Rick: 'The Servant Girl at Emmaus' by Denise Levertov.

Cath: 'Heredity' by Thomas Hardy.

Gary: 'Decreation (The Big Bang Theory)' by Steve Turner.

Peter: A Prayer composed by John Wesley.

3.5iii Summary of RPPG C

C1 Recruitment for RPPG C

The Research Design had allowed for the possibility of a research group taking place over 24 hours in a residential setting, such as a retreat house or conference centre. This is a familiar context for clergy CMD work, and I have led several poetry-based reflection programmes and retreats for clergy in such settings. It was also part of the design to undertake research with a group of clergy from another diocese, for whom I do not have a direct CMD responsibility. Both these aims combined in RPPG C, which was comprised of clergy from another West Midlands diocese. Although some of my clergy work is done on a regional basis with other dioceses in the West Midlands, including clergy from this diocese, I have no formal responsibility for them and they are not accountable to me in any way. Thus the relationship between researcher and participants in RPPG C is not characterised by any dimension of diocesan hierarchy, though it should be noted that the CME officer for diocese C, Nancy, was a participant, which may have introduced a different kind of authority-based bias in the group. Nancy was known to me as a colleague.

It is also worth noting that at several points in the residential participants made reference to the research context of our conversations, so there was awareness on the part of participants of an external purpose and accountability constituted by the research process rather than diocesan expectations of CME.

Recruitment was undertaken by participant Nancy in her capacity as CME officer for the diocese. She did this in several stages, identifying particular clergy she felt had an interest in poetry, the arts and creativity, and through a general email to Curates . My outline to Nancy had outlined that participants need not be poetry enthusiasts, but they should be able to make a commitment to the duration of the residential. As I have no responsibility for the assessment or career progression of Curates beyond my own diocese I had agreed that they were candidates for participation. Nancy circulated the outline programme and Participant Information to interested parties, and once participants had been recruited, she also forwarded to them by e-mail copies of the IQ, a request to bring a poem of their own choosing with copies for each participant and other details of the research. Some participants returned the IQ to me by e-mail before the residential; participant Nancy was not asked to handle any administration or data material beyond the recruitment stage. She led corporate worship at the residential, but not any of the group sessions.

C2 Profile of participants for RPPG C

C2.1 Personal and professional profile

RPPG C comprised five women clergy, all serving in C Diocese; Suzy in her thirties, Helen, Nancy and Christine in their forties, and Cora in her fifties. All were white British in ethnic origin, and all were full-time stipendiary clergy, having trained full-time for ordained ministry. Professional lives prior to ordination were as a Police Officer, R.E. Teacher, Civil Engineer in Waste Management, Music Teacher and Caterer, and one participant had come to ordained ministry direct from Higher Education.

All participants had been in their present post for fewer than five years; for three it was their first appointment since Curacy, and for two their second. No participants had been in Holy Orders longer than fifteen years, and three had been ordained less than ten years. Three were Incumbents of parishes; one participant was a Curate seconded to a benefice with primary responsibility (effectively priest-in-charge), and one was diocesan CMD officer with a part-time self-supporting role as assistant priest in the suburban parish of which participant Christine is Vicar. In addition to Nancy there was a degree of diocesan responsibility represented in the group: Christine serving as assistant Diocesan Director of Ordinands in addition to her parish role, and Helen as assistant Area Dean. The full-time parish priests identified their contexts for ministry as inner-urban (Suzy), rural (Cora), and two as suburban (Christine and Helen). They designated their church tradition as Charismatic Evangelical (Helen), Open Evangelical (Nancy), Central (Christine), Anglo-Catholic (Suzy), and Liberal-eclectic (Cora).

C2.2 Participants' personal approaches to CME (as expressed in IQ)

Whilst three participants in RPPG C include personal reading and study as a regular means of pursuing CMD, there is a stronger preference for conferences, courses and programmes than in other research groups, including New Wine and the regional Leadership Programme. Every participant gives several instances of conversation with colleagues, Spiritual Director, cell-group, partner and so on as a source of reflection on ministry. One participant mentions Twitter, blogs and social media as a written source for inspiration, which is unique in this clergy sample. Others specifically mention Scripture and some academic theologians. None includes poetry as a primary written source for inspiration.

C2.3 Participants' individual relationship to poetry (as expressed in IQ)

As with other reflection groups, responses of all participants suggest a consciousness of the place of poetry in Scripture and in liturgy, identifying passages and poetic language that has particular significance for them, and all say that they use poetry in the course of their ministry, particularly at weddings and funerals and occasionally in preaching. One participant states that she has no personal connection with poetry at all and that it is not a personal resource for her; she chooses the words "obscure, complex, liturgical, eccentric, self-indulgent" to describe what poetry currently means for her. In contrast, other participants state that they read poetry regularly, and three of them write poetry. In reflecting on why they value their favourite poem some offer very appreciative comments: "It challenges me to give myself over to God more fully when I am far off, expresses my love for him when I am near, I also like the structure of sonnets"; "…I understand it at first glance, but then there are many layers, the more you think about it, and I think of it often…"; "It speaks gently – like God!".

C3 Profile of process for RPPG C

C3.1 Dates, Times and Locations of sessions.

The group met at a Retreat and Conference Centre for an overnight residential on 11th-12th 2013. All five sessions and the group review session took place in the sitting-room of the house, interspersed with meals and worship. The format of the sessions followed the

same protocol as for RPPG A, with the addition of a reflection period at the beginning of sessions 2, 3, 4 and 5. Session 1 was longer than the others in order to induct participants into the process of the research and their part in it.

Participation in the group was sustained by all members across all five sessions. My field notes record that the sequence of sessions, interspersed with shared meals in the dining room and (optional) worship in the Chapel, felt well-paced. At times the atmosphere was intense when emotions ran high in the group sessions. I found that due to the concentration required, I the residential format was mentally and emotionally tiring, but felt like a powerful and constructive experience to have paid sustained attention to poetry and ministry in such a concentrated way.

C3.2 Neutral Observer

The Neutral Observer was present for all RPPG C sessions, and for meals and worship during the residential.

C3.3 Data recording and transcription

I continued to record group conversations directly on to my laptop PC rather than using a separate digital recorder, as the quality of recording was good. Audibility in the sitting room was fine and it was helpful that we were able to have use of the same room throughout the residential. I arranged the room in advance of the meetings to ensure mutual eye-contact and best positioning in relation to the recording device, which was placed in the centre of our circle of chairs. I took detailed notes of the conversation by hand in a notebook, which also record mood of the group and non-verbal characteristics of the interaction. Participants chose to keep the same seating arrangements throughout all six sessions. I transcribed these data as soon as practicable after the event, over the course of several weeks. This felt very cumbersome, but I was able to immerse myself in the data as I transcribed.

C4 Poems

Within the compressed timescale of the residential the pattern of sessions in RPPG C was identical to RPPG B, concluding with a group review session before lunch on Day 2. I used the same poems with the exception of Session 2, in which I substituted the poem ‘A Priest at a Funeral’ by Manon Ceridwen for Benjamin Zephaniah’s poem ‘Soho Road’. I felt that it was important, in an all-women group, to stimulate reflection on practice through presenting a poem written by a woman priest, though these are still relatively rare in the public domain of published poetry. It seemed to me that Manon’s poem on funeral ministry, published on her website, would foster conversation through its powerful language describing her perceptions and experiences as a woman priest exercising public pastoral ministry. I gained Manon’s permission to use the poem in the research.

Day 1 Monday

Introduction	11.00 -11.30am	
Session 1	11.30-12.30pm	R.S. Thomas, ‘Sick Visits’;

Session 2	2.15-3.15pm	Manon Ceridwen, ‘A Priest at a Funeral’;
Session 3	5.00-6.00pm	Anne Stevenson, ‘A Prayer to Live with Real People’;
Session 4	8.00-9.00pm	Participants’ choices of poems.

Day 2 Tuesday

Session 5	9.45-10.45am	Thomas Hardy, ‘In Church’;
Session 6	11.3 -12.30pm	Individual Reflection & Group Review.

In session 4 the following poems were presented by participants:

Suzy: ‘The Gift’ by R.S. Thomas.

Cora: ‘God Treads Softly Here’ by Trevor Dennis.

Nancy: ‘Here’ by Philip Larkin.

Christine: ‘The Skylight’ by Seamus Heaney.

Helen: ‘It is Finished’ by Adrian Plass.

3.5iv Summary of RPPG D

D1 Recruitment for RPPG D

All the participants in RPPG D were from Birmingham Diocese, and all were known to me from a variety of interactions arising from my CMD role. Interest in the research began to accrue over time among my colleagues. Some clergy in Birmingham expressed interest in participating, having seen the advertisement in the Diocesan Bulletin, and approached me personally. Others knew of the research from conversations I had with them about CMD matters and had asked if they could participate.

The challenge of finding a series of times when I could gather six clergy for six successive sessions remained a challenge. It is interesting how my approach to recruitment has evolved through the development of the research process; I realised how a programme for the sessions made the commitment and involvement clear and apparent for potential participants in RPPG C. This gives the research project the appearance of a standard CME course or programme – with advantages and disadvantages.

An advantage is transparency of commitment and economical use of time. Initially I was expecting to run five sessions over a series of months, as for RPPG B. I spoke to one or two potential participants and realised that availability was an issue for them, and so I developed the programme for RPPG D as a series of three morning or afternoon meetings, combining two sessions in each day. This made the best use of available time, and is a return to the pattern of RPPG A to some degree, but had the disadvantage of giving less space between sessions for reflection and for the group to develop its own ethos. Another issue was

whether sessions might seem overly compacted – was there sufficient 'air' between sessions to let reflections arise?

The programme appealed to a variety of people to whom I sent it with a list of potential dates – some declined because of work commitments, but others enthusiastically accepted. My impression was that participants were seeing it as an opportunity for reflection on ministry – and I kept the title which I developed for RPPG C "Reflection on ministry through poetry and conversation".

Within such an experienced group with longstanding service in Birmingham most of the clergy participants had some form of professional inter-connection – one had been the Training Incumbent of another, for example – but none asked who was participating before accepting or declining.

D2 Profile of participants for RPPG D.

D2.1 Personal and professional profile

RPPG D comprised six clergy all serving in Birmingham Diocese; Chad in his thirties; Paula in her forties, Faith, Beatrix, James and Paul in their fifties. Four were white British in ethnic origin, and Chad and Paula were south-east Asian born in India. All were full-time stipendiary clergy, three having trained full-time for ordained ministry and one part-time.

Professional lives prior to ordination included a Teacher (Paula), Social Worker (James), Bank Manager (Paul), Computer Programmer (Faith), Theological Lecturer and Teacher (Beatrix). Formal academic qualifications in this group were strong: a PhD in theology (Beatrix), two Masters degrees in theology (Faith, Paul), a BA in Philosophy (James).

Five participants were Incumbents, one of whom had additional responsibilities as in school and university chaplaincy. The Chad served in a combined ministry of Team Vicar and University Chaplain. Chad had been in the current post for less than five years, and three for between five and ten years. For one this was the first post since Curacy, for the second, and another the third. There was a range of experience among participants: B, F and Paul had been in Holy Orders for over twenty years, and J for between fifteen and twenty.

Participants identified their contexts for ministry as inner urban (Chad), two as suburban (Beatrix and Paula) and one as outer estate (James)…. and their church tradition as Evangelical, Low to Central, Liberal Catholic, and one declined to specify.

D2.2 Participants' personal approaches to CMD (as expressed in IQ)

Group D participants show a broad range of CMD engagement – Spring Harvest, pilgrimage, retreats, a part-time MA as well as personal reading, Bishop's study days for clergy and special interest groups. Conversation with colleagues and cell groups are also mentioned. In terms of written resources, two mention poetry as a regular source of inspiration, one commenting "I probably read more poetry than theology".

D2.3 Participants' individual relationship to poetry (as expressed in IQ)

All respondents have a strong sense of poetry in Scripture and liturgy, and make use of poetry in a variety of ways in ministry. There is a strong awareness of poetry and its affect; one mentions that her favourite poem is valuable because "…it calls me to stop and look and notice the detail of a simple action", and another that Adrien Rich's poem 'Division of Labour' provides a "synthesis of political and mystical like nothing else". Only one participant mentions that she writes poetry.

D3 Profile of process for RPPG D

D3.1 Dates, times and location of sessions.

I decided to use the same protocols as in previous groups in terms of

a. Introduction Session – introduce ourselves and our context. I introduce research project; ensure that everyone have received and read participant information; any questions; confidentiality; space to withdraw; collect participant agreements; collect initial questionnaires.
b. Process for the Group Sessions – poem, brief introduction, conversation/responses, invite summary responses, read poem again, gather summary responses.
c. At the start of Day 2 and Day 3 (i.e. in Session 3 and in Session 5) I ask participants if they have any reflections on the previous sessions to gain a sense of their impressions of the process as we proceed.

One difference in RPPG D is that to gain participant reflections on the process I used the method evolved for RPPG C, which is for Session 6 to begin with an individual questionnaire and then to have a group reflection on the process.

The reason for this is that participant reflections about the research experience generated in a group conversation were no less insightful or acute than the perceptions expressed in one-to-one semi-structured interviews. It seemed valuable to have insights from two sets of one-to-one reflections from RPPGs A and B to compare with two group review sessions from RPPGs C and D, and to see what similarities and differences these generated in their reflections on poetry in CME.

I retained the option of asking individuals from RPPG D for one-to-one interviews if there was a need – for example, if significant conflict develops in the group that participants may be reluctant to talk about in a group situation, as in RPPG A, but the data generated by the group review was sufficient.

The group met at the vicarage of Beatrix for all six sessions, which were arranged over three days. This location was easily accessible from all areas of the city, had good car-parking, and Beatrix's dining room table was just large to seat six participants and myself and the neutral observer. The timings of the sessions were in line with the schedule proposed in the outline Programme (D4 below), including an opportunity for participants to share a poem of their own choosing on Day 2 at session 4. The format of the sessions followed the same protocol as for RPPG A, with the addition of a reflection period planned for the beginning of sessions

3 and 5 to gather reflections on the previous day. Session 1 was longer than the others in order to induct participants into the process of the research and their part in it. In the event, session 3 at the outset of Day 2 was problematical because a participant was late arriving, and delaying the start of the group for their arrival meant that I allowed the opportunity for reflection to pass. I made the snap decision to switch sessions on Day 2 so that participant poems were shared in session 3 rather than session 4.

Participation in the group was sustained by all members across all three days except for one participant who had to miss session 2 on Day 1 because of unavoidable commitments elsewhere. Beatrix provided coffee on arrival and between sessions.

D3.2 Neutral Observer

The Neutral Observer was present for both sessions on Day 1 and on Day 3.

D3.3 Data recording and transcription.

I continued to record group conversations directly on to my laptop PC. The seating was adequate but felt less generous than for other groups. Audibility in the sitting room was fine as was visibility. I took detailed notes of the conversation by hand in a notebook, which also record the mood of the group and non-verbal characteristics of the interaction. I transcribed these data as soon as practicable after the event.

D4 Poems

The poems used were those for RPPG C with minor adjustment. I decided to retain Manon Ceridwen James's poem 'A Priest at a Funeral' in session 2 because it had stimulated a rich conversation in the previous group, and to replace Anne Stevenson's poem with Benjamin Zephaniah's in session 3 because I was interested to see what responses a local poet would evoke with a different group of Birmingham clergy.

Day 1: Wednesday (3 hours) 1pm - 4pm

Introduction 30 mins

Session 1: 60 mins Poem: 'Sick Visits' by R.S. Thomas

Break: 30 mins

Session 2: 60 mins Poem: 'A Priest at a Funeral' by Manon Parry

Day 2: Monday (2.5 hours) 10am - 12.30pm

Session 3: 60 mins Poem: 'Soho Road' by Benjamin Zephaniah.

Break: 30 mins

Session 4: 60 mins Sharing Poems brought by participants

Day 3: Thursday (2.5 hours) 10am - 12.30pm

Session 5: 60 mins Poem: 'In Church' by Thomas Hardy

Break: 30 mins

Concluding Session & Review: 60 mins

In session 4 the following poems were presented by participants:

Paul: 'Rubbish at Adultery' by Sophie Hannah.

James: 'A Priest at the Door' by David Scott.

Beatrix: 'Out of Reach' by John Dutton.

Faith: 'How to Stuff a Pepper' by Nancy Willard.

Chad: 'Closed Path' by Rabindranath Tagore.

Paula: 'Prayer' by Carol Ann Duffy.

Appendix 3.6a Role of Neutral Observer

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

'The Poetry of Priesthood' Research Project:

Reflective Practice Poetry Group: The Role of Impartial Observer.

In some of the Reflective Practice Poetry Groups there will be a person who is present as an Impartial Observer.

We envisage this role as one of independent judge in some but not all of the Reflective Practice Groups for the purpose of triangulation: offering an alternative perspective to that of the post-graduate researcher on the operation of the groups in order to provide a rich and more accurate interpretation of what occurs.

The Impartial Observer is not acting in the role of "Research Assistant", which suggests a degree of academic co-participation in the research project.

The Impartial Observer will be a volunteer and s/he will not be responsible for leading any of the research exercise.

The person who has agreed to serve in this limited way is a recent graduate of the University, *N* [name withheld]. He does not have a close personal or professional relationship with any of the clergy participants.

Dr Harvey is fully aware of and compliant with the appropriate ethical conduct of this research project, as set out in the Participant Information and Participation Agreement, which reflects the University's Code of Practice for Research, particularly concerning the obligation of confidentiality.

MP
April 2013

Appendix 3.6b Neutral Observer summary reflections

What did the responses of the participants suggest about the contribution of poetry to clergy professional development?

The use of poetry had one remarkable effect which was observable in all the groups: reflection on the poems provoked profound reflection on personal experiences of ministry, which it seems unlikely the participants would have been able to access or articulate so quickly and naturally, or so deeply and affectingly, if asked to do so directly, rather than through reflecting on a poem. Possibly poetry is a particularly effective medium in this respect. The artist Anish Kapoor said that art helps us to "feel more intelligently". Perhaps poetry acts like a physical work of art in the way Kapoor suggests, but in linguistic form – poetry uses language to structure emotion, is by nature evocative and reflective, and often not immediately intelligible, or offers a number of possible interpretations. As such, perhaps it is uniquely suited to elicit reflection on one's own experience, and help a person to become articulate about that experience, but not in a single, straightforwardly comprehensible or one-dimensional way. In a reflective and people-centred profession like ministry, that would seem to be of enormous value in helping people to understand and come to terms with their own responses and those of others in a pastoral context, and help them develop in terms of wisdom in dealing with others, and in their own spiritual development.

Reflecting on and discussing poetry also made people less self-conscious about reflecting on ministry, through focusing on the poem and drawing on their own resources and comparable experiences in order to understand it. This un-self-conscious focus on the poem seemed to facilitate their reflection on ministry and make it more fruitful.

The group context was very valuable. Once experiences and reflection on them began to emerge, others were able to relate to and comment on what was said, and this furthered reflection and discussion. The atmosphere in all the groups was trusting and mutually supportive (though tensions did emerge), and obviously this contributed. The groups became forums for clergy to share experiences of ministry and ideas about their meaning and how to cope with them. Again, this would seem to be very valuable for professional development.

One participant commented that poetry helped her to gain a sense of the "sacredness" of individual human encounters, often of an everyday kind, during ministry. Poetry seems to help to sacramentalise the everyday, and contextualise ministry in a broader spiritual and human context. Another suggested that poetry helped to think about what being a priest is, by obliging one to think about what is implicitly known but difficult to articulate. Poetry helped to think about the craft of ministry seen through the prism of the poems.

[name withheld]

January 2013.

Appendix 3.7 Protocol for one-to-one interviews

This was established in advance of the first one-to one interview (Interview A.1) and evolved further before Interview A.2 and again at different stages in the fieldwork.

RPPG A Protocol

1. Environment:

Ensure that the interview is taking place in an appropriate environment – convenient location, comfortable for one hour's sitting, not overheard by others, free from disturbance or intrusion by others, suitable arrangements of chairs/table for recording a conversation.

2. Equipment:

Ensure that the equipment is working so that data collection is unimpeded – digital recorder is operating, spare batteries available, notebook and pen to hand.

3. Procedure:

Thank you for participating in a further session.

Explain purpose of one-to-one:

Follow-up to the group sessions to learn more about individual experience of the group, to reflect on the character of reflection that poetry might have fostered (or not), and on the methodology of the RPPG, so that I can reflect more on the group practice and the role of poetry within it.

4. Ethics:

Remind participant of Participant Information Sheet – purpose of study, recording of data, boundaries of confidentiality, freedom to withdraw, time-limit of one week to withdraw recorded data – same for one-to-one as for RPPG sessions.

5. Agreement:

If individual participant agrees to these working conditions, proceed with questions for up to one hour.

6. Follow questions, lines of enquiry:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

Introduction: Thank you for participating in the Reflective Practice Poetry Groups, and for agreeing to participate in this follow-up interview. The purpose is to reflect further on the process of the group and the role that poetry played.

Q: Thinking back to the group sessions, is there a poem which has stayed with you – which you've found yourself thinking about further?

Q: What is it that is so significant for you in this poem?

Q: Are there words or images from the poem that strike you particularly?

Q: Were there aspects of how the poems were introduced or 'handled' which helped or hindered?

E.g. Introductions to the poem – too much? Too little? Does it help to have the poem 'explained', or better to leave it speak for itself?

Q: Was it the poems themselves, or the group process which the poems stimulated, that had the most impact for you?

Q: Has being part of the group affected your thinking about ministry or your practice since?

Q: Have you found yourself taking a different approach to words since being part of the group?

Conclusion.

7. Thanks to participant.

8. Transfer data to computer and diocesan server as soon as feasible after interview for safe keeping.

9. Write up Field Notes as soon as possible after the interview.

Rationale for selecting Interviewees:

RPPG A

Following the completion and transcription of the final session of RPPG A, I approached two of the participants to ask if they would be willing to offer reflections on their experience of the process as a way of intensifying the reflexivity of the research process: participants Shirley and Michaela. The method for data-gathering through participant interviews was the same as for the groups: the interviews were digitally audio-recorded; the audio-file was transferred to PC and secure storage on the diocesan server.

The one-to-one nature of the encounter suggested to me that maintaining eye contact with the interviewee and communicating full attention to her was fundamental to the quality and feel of the interview, and so handwritten notes of the interview with Shirley (IA1) are more an impressionistic summary of the conversation as it evolved rather than a verbatim record. At the outset of my interview with Michaela (IA2) my impression was that she was somewhat on edge and so my notes are written after the event in order to give her full attention and put her at ease. These aural data supported by hand-written notes were transcribed as soon as practicable after the interviews. Both interviews were prefaced by ensuring that participants were informed about the ethical basis for their participation and that they understood this was on the same basis as for material shared in the groups.

Participant Interview A1

The first participant interview to reflect on RPPG A took place with Shirley in a private room at her place of work between 3.45-4.45pm on Wednesday 2012.

My rationale for interviewing Shirley was driven primarily by a sense of her distinctiveness within the group and what light this might throw on the use of poetry in the group setting:

i. Shirley has the loosest connection with other members of RPPG A. Though Shirley has worked with all the participants in varying ways in her capacity as a diocesan officer, she is not in regular contact as a colleague.

ii. Unlike the others, Shirley does not minister in a parish setting, and the context of her ministry is not located in north Birmingham, but spreads across the diocese.

iii. Shirley comes from a tradition different from the other three, who are Anglo-Catholics. Though Shirley declined to self-define in terms of Church tradition in her IQ, this is in itself indicative of her distinctiveness from the other participants.

iv. Also Shirley's educational background is different: the other participants are Oxbridge educated, reading theology subsequently at residential colleges in the catholic tradition. Shirley read theology as an undergraduate, and was trained for ministry in mid-life in a part-time capacity after a career as a lay Minister and as a full-time mother.

v. Shirley's intellectual sympathies appeared to be different at times in the Group – for example, the influence of feminist theology began to emerge as a theme for Shirley in her interpretation of the poems – most apparent in the conversation about Murray's poem 'Visitor'.

vi. Shirley, on the whole, was much slower to participate in the conversations in the sessions, and I wondered what her sense of the group might be and whether the management of the group might have helped or hindered participation from her perspective.

vii. I was also interested that Shirley had written in her IQ that she seldom drew on poetry as a form of reflective material. I wanted to know what her impressions of poetry might be having experienced the group, and whether the group experience of reading and discussing together had made poetry more accessible for her.

Participant Interview A2

The second participant interview to reflect on the experience of RPPG A took place with Michaela at her home between 3.30-4.45pm on Sunday 2012.

My rationale for interviewing Michaela was as follows:

i. Michaela had consistently engaged in a positive way with the poems and conversations in the RPPG sessions, and I was interested to hear more of her impressions and experience of the group.

ii. In her parochial role Michaela was familiar with the context of Soho Road which Benjamin Zephaniah describes in his poem, and I was interested to hear more of Michaela's reflections on the poem as it relates (or doesn't) to her own experience of ministry.

iii. I was also aware from comments in the RPPG that Michaela had used the poem with ordinands on placement, and I wanted to hear more about how and why she had done this.

iv. I was interested to hear Michaela's reflections on the group in terms of how it functioned, particularly her perceptions as a woman in the Catholic tradition of the inter-relationship between Shirley and Matthew.

Reflections on interviews A1 and A2

For these first interviews I found that I was reluctant to follow a series of pre-prepared questions in any strict sense, though I had mentally prepared for the encounter of course. My notes indicate how at this stage of the project I was sensing a tension between the researching and CME roles:

> (the interview) raises the question for me as to whether I ought to adopt a definite approach to interviewing, and if so, how can this allow for the conversational style which suits my professional approach as an Adviser working alongside clergy colleagues rather than as a researcher seeking to collect data. My educational role as a practitioner of clergy ministerial development is to help participants in learning to foster insight which will be of value to their growth and understanding of self-in-role. Is the role of researcher, seeking to gain information *from* participants, in conflict with my professional role of seeking to foster reflection and learning *with* and *for* them? I shared with Shirley some of the reasons why I had asked to have a follow-up interview with her (IA1.1MP).

Furthermore, on typing up the transcript and subsequent analysis, I was able to identify a second tension in my approach to the research as I came to feel that my research interest in the interview had been too much on perceptions of S's conflict with M in the final sessions of the group. To some degree this placed the focus on group dynamics and shifted critical attention away from the role of poetry in reflective practice (though this was of course addressed in the conversation).

Reflection on these dimensions of the interviewing led to the distilling of a more developed methodology for in-depth interviewing and a clear protocol for questions to pursue the research question.

RPPG B

I approached participants Peter and Janet to ask if they would participate in an interview to explore their reflections on the experience of RPPG B. Both agreed. For interviews B1 and B2 I followed the same procedures for data recording, storage and transcription as A1 and A2. I used the protocol of questions I had evolved from reflection on the interviews A1 and A2.

Participant Interview B1

The interview with Peter took place at his rural vicarage between 2.30 and 3.30pm on Tuesday 2013. My rationale for interviewing Peter was:

i. Peter had consistently engaged in a positive way with the poems and conversations in the RPPG sessions; I was interested to hear more of his impressions and experience of the group.

ii. In particular, Peter had talked in the group about poems which had stayed with him; I wanted to hear more about that experience.

iii. Peter is working in a rural context, which is rare in the Diocese of Birmingham, so I wanted to know whether this context might have some bearing on his appreciation of the process.

iv. Peter's background is in international business; I wanted to hear what a person with this kind of experience makes of poetry as a tool for reflection.

v. My impression of Peter is of a person who focusses on detail and who is highly analytical – a different personality and style from me. I felt it would be illuminating to gain his insights into the process.

Participant Interview B2

The interview with Janet took place at her vicarage between 11.45am and 12.45pm on Tuesday 2013. My rationale for interviewing J was:

i. Janet had consistently engaged in a positive way with the poems and conversations in the RPPG sessions, and I was interested to hear more of her impressions and experience of the group.

ii. Early on in the group sessions and in her Initial Questionnaire response Janet had expressed that she had very little connection with poetry on a personal basis, though she did talk about using poems regularly in her pastoral ministry. I wanted to hear more about this and if her approach to poetry had changed at all during the group experience.

Comparing Participant Interviews for RPPG A and RPPG B

In conducting these in-depth interviews I found that the series of questions I had established enabled me to maintain a balanced focus on the issues I wanted to pursue around the research question, rather than locking the focus of the interview into any particular topic or theme. This was as much about my own intentionality as researcher as it was about the interrogative strategy of the interview. The interviews B1 and B2 give greater attention to the role of poetry in the groups than A1 and A2 achieved, without losing an awareness of the importance of process.

Reflection on Interview following RPPG C

Though I had not intended to conduct individual interviews following RPPG C, after consultation with my research supervisers I decided to ask Nancy, the clergy CME Officer who had recruited for RPPG C, if she would offer her reflections on the event from a professional development perspective. The interview took place at a conference venue between 3.00-4.00pm on Wednesday , during a free afternoon on a clergy residential which we were co-leading. As we both needed fresh air the interview took place outside on the patio. I prepared a series of seven questions which I had sent by email to Nancy in advance of our conversation. Unlike the other interviews this was not digitally recorded, but I took verbatim notes by hand as the interview progressed. I did not attempt to record every word but to capture key points and phrases and to record the flow of the conversation, which followed my questions.

As a clergy CME Officer…

1. Did you recruit participants by individual invitation, or through a more general advertisement, or both?

2. In recruiting participants, did you have specific development purposes in mind?

3. Was the all-women make-up of the group intentional or accidental?

4. From your perspective as a CME practitioner, what are your reflections on the dynamics within the group in terms of gender:

   a – between participants?
   b – between researcher/facilitator and participants?

5. As an exercise in ministerial development for clergy, what was distinctive about the kinds of reflection that the poetry stimulated?

6. Would you consider using this method of a poetry reflection group for clergy again? If so, why? What seems valuable about it in terms of clergy CME?

1. Describe what kind of experience the RPPG sessions were for you.

2. What contributed to this?

e.g. Make up of participants in the group?

Quality of facilitation?

Choice of poems?

Clarity of process?

Character of ground-rules – confidentiality, intentionality?

Lack of any professional monitoring or evaluation?

3. What is your experience more generally of clergy reflection in groups?

e.g. Training Incumbent-Curate;

Team Meetings; Deanery Chapter; Cell Group;

Developing Leadership Course; Bishop's Study Days;

Mentor; MDR Consultant.

4. Was there anything distinctive about *poetry* as a focus or tool for reflection?

(in contrast to film/music/prose/art/Bible/anecdote and discussion.)

5. Has anything changed for you following your participation in the Poetry Reflection Group?

e.g. You have been reading poetry;

Find yourself thinking about the poems;

You are thinking about poetry in a different way;

A change in your self-understanding in terms of your professional identity;

Reflecting more on your experience or practice of ministry;

A change in your practice of ministry in some way?

Appendix 3.8 Extract from the research journal: reflexive dialogue method

RMP: Hello DPT. It's good to meet you after so much time.

DPT: Is it really our first meeting, after almost three years?

RMP: Well, we've sat in the same room often – the Library, my Study – and I've carried you round in my head all the time, in fact you've been on holiday with me, and have even popped in on Christmas Day and all kinds of less-than-ideal moments, but we've not really had a chance for an explicit conversation before.

DPT: Well, well, I didn't know you cared…

So what is it you'd like to say? Or ought I to be asking questions?

RMP: Yes, why don't you go first?

DPT: You seem to be treating me with a certain deference. Are you feeling nervous?

RMP: I suppose I am nervous in a way. The only conversation I ever imagined having with you was a Viva! Not that a Viva would be *you* exactly, any more than the initial interview was you, either. What I'm trying to say is that I hadn't expected us ever to meet face to face.

DPT: Are you surprised by what you find? It's my leopard-skin leggings and stiletto heels, perhaps?

RMP: Um…well, your appearance is not quite what I had imagined.

DPT: So what *had* you imagined? Who was DPT to you? Tweed jacket and brogues perhaps? Or academic gown and doctoral bonnet? Or maybe denim dungarees?

RMP: You seem very keen to know what I make of you!

DPT: Believe me, I am! It's part of what I am – very quintessentially me – to want to know who I am in your head.

RMP: In my head?

DPT: Yes, in your head and perhaps your heart, and your guts too. What shape have I been given in the life of RMP? I'm longing to know.

RMP: Truth be told, I hadn't ever given you a personality. To me you were out there at a distance, rising up on the horizon – quite literally, in the form of the University campanile and domes as I drive to and from work, or even when I go to the shops. Sometimes I find the sight of those University buildings inspiring and I feel pleased to be associated with the institution […] Sometimes you've felt like an internalised bureaucratic power, demanding, insatiable, inscrutable.

DPT: How delightful! So to you, I've become more than a distant academic institution or a qualification to be gained? You're saying we have a kind of mutuality?

RMP: Now you're speaking with me, asking me questions, making me wonder what you are to me, who I am in relation to you, I do recognise that my participation in this research programme has taken on a life of its own. But I can't pretend we're friends - you stand for academic regulations and deadlines, imposing fees and formal expectations. I can't help feeling suspicious, that this conversation is something of a pose – you're like an undergraduate experimenting with your identity, somewhat eccentrically presented, determined to catch me out.

DPT: I wonder if you can come to trust me. I feel it's important for you to know that who I am depends in no small way on who you are and what I mean to you, what I become in your life-story. It's true, what you say – I am trying to find myself, and who I am as DPT will be formed in relationship with you.

RMP: Now you're sounding rather like a pious pastoral studies lecture on marriage, and horribly intense!

DPT: But it was you who said we went on holiday together; I came along on Christmas Day; sometimes I'm there in bed or at meals: we've shared all kinds of special moments, you and me.

RMP: Oh yes, you were there – and quite often you felt like an intruder, sitting there making me feel guilty about not working on my research, or asking questions about issues I wanted to take for granted. You can be a complete nuisance, a real party-pooper.

DPT: Is it always like that? I want to hear your story of our special relationship. I need you to write me into being; to tell me into life. Let me convince you with a poem – it's about not taking monumental institutions at face value.

Walking towards the Taj Mahal

Do not be over-awed, weary traveller,

Excited pilgrim,

When you look upon the rising beauty

Of my exquisite dome, my soaring towers, my graceful colonnades.

All my stones are a kind of lie.

I am the secret at the heart of me: a story, a love, a grief.

DPT: So start talking: tell me the story. Where does it begin? What was it that first drew you to me? Not just my glossy brochure, surely?

RMP: You will recall that I put some things down on paper for my admission interview which describes my motivation at the time. As Clergy CME Adviser I was looking for a programme which would contribute to my own professional development in a role which was fairly new to me, and which was set to change under the Common Tenure legislation proposed for clergy. My research ideas clustered around what might constitute 'appropriate CME' for clergy…

APPENDICES - CHAPTER FOUR

Appendix 4.1 Participant responses to poems impacting on my interpretation

To extend and deepen my appreciation of the research poems in the light of participant responses, I noted participant reflections on what the poems evoked for them in the sessions and reflected on these. Participant reflections included responses to poems shared at the conclusion of RPPG sessions (their chosen phrases/metaphors/issues) but also reflections they articulated in the conversations which comprised the main part of sessions.

This selection of participant reflections indicates how the research process helped me to develop a much richer culture around the poems. I am more aware of the potential range of meanings the poems evoke, so I am better equipped to facilitate sessions and interpret what participants are saying with greater clarity and nuance.

4.1a Reflections on 'Sick Visits' by R.S. Thomas

I presented the poem as a description of pastoral encounter between priest and lay-person, healthy person and sick person, mobile visitor and incapacitated bed-bound person. Through the sessions I developed a more nuanced appreciation of the poem out of participant reflections on it. For example in RPPG A1 John's focus on the line 'fumbling with thick tongue for words' emphasised what he called "the problem of communication" in pastoral encounter, which was inhibited not only for the old lady, but also for the visitor lost for words in the seriousness of the situation. There was also the sense that the old ladies retain the flame of life within their exterior decay, which can inspire the visitor – Shirley notes "the surprise of 'the fire their smiles kindle' in contrast with the earlier austerity". Participants also focus on the fundamental nature of the pastoral task. So Michaela emphasises the line 'But without them', asking "what would ministry be without these encounters?".

My most memorable epiphany in relation to 'Sick Visits' was in RPPG B when Rick interprets the phrase 'pale eyes/Wintering me' as the gaze of the sick old lady "removing the camouflage" from the visiting priest: the exposing nature of the pastoral encounter for the 'powerful' and 'heathy' Minister. The sick person pierces the protective, illusory, self-comforting exterior of the un-suffering servant. In the same group, Cath's ministerial experience with ethnic minority parishioners leads her to interrogate the poem's cultural specificity: "I do have a question about how specific this is, given my experience in a multi-racial context, about what the elderly expect from the priest, why they hold to church." (B1.5) How relevant is the poem beyond the place about which it was written: are poems trans-cultural, or 'relevant' only to their context of origin? Cath questions a poem's universal validity; can it operate effectively beyond its context? This makes the historical-critical dimension of interpretation important in enabling appreciation of a poem by giving it a context. Otherwise the poem will be dislocated, and may feel alien or incomprehensible to the reader.

In RPPG C (the all-female group) the gendered nature of the poem was a focus: "it's always old ladies" who are sick in their beds. Also the wonderful conversation about widows and

older women whom these women priests treasure: Helen says "I keep seeing a photo-album of faces of different people."

In RPPG D Beatrix's focus on the phrase "but without them" suggests that the poem is a "reminder of the crucial nature of this ministry and all that it gives us". For James the poem grounds pastoral work in relationship with the divine through the sick and dependent, who are also full of life: "I am quite struck by 'I listen/They are far off/The echoes return slow': how we encounter God in humanity". Faith feels that the poem emphasises the aspect of ministry which is "something about connectedness and staying in touch with those who may be in very challenging circumstances". Paula echoes the impression Helen gathers in RPPG C: "I can't help being amazed how many visits and how many people are encompassed in these few lines". Paul also finds a theme picked up elsewhere about the vibrancy of the sick person as a human being: 'Life in its brief play' reminds him that "…there is whole person there with a whole life. I find that an attractive way to view a person, rather than being fixated on the current situation they are in".

4.1b Reflections on 'A Prayer to Live with Real People' by Anne Stevenson

In RPPG A4 there is the sense of the language of the poem evoking the working-class parish setting very effectively, but also the ambiguity of the language, bordering on the deprecatory: so Michaela says "I love the descriptions of the first stanza – we have a friend who describes a row of oldies in church as 'cotton buds'"; John agrees, but is cautious: "It's a poem about types and categories. The phrase 'pub people' is a great category, but sounds ever-so damning."

In RPPG B participants are concerned about the authorial stance regarding this poem – is the poet 'religious'? Is she one of them, or an observer? What is her involvement with the people down the pub? Is she the Vicar, married to the Vicar, married to one of them? There is recognition of the social scene she describes in the ministry of many participants – she is an effective ethnographer – yet there is certain unease with the poem, because it does not elide social difference with some form of moral cause or rationale for the poet's choice of subject. Is it patronising, voyeuristic? What does the level of engagement or non-engagement with the poem indicate about the attitudes, conscious or otherwise, of Ministers working in situations of difference regarding culture and class?

What can the Facilitator do to enable the participants to engage more constructively with some of the challenges that the poem offers?

The poem evoked strong expressions of commitment to mission alongside the poor – to be prophetic in a stance against Society's judgements. Cath says: "Society judges these people described in the poem – "Woe be-tide us if we don't live for ever with them" (B3.5). She also hears it as a powerful assertion of the gospel demand in ministry for us to involve ourselves in marginalised communities: "There's something said in one of our other sessions about 'getting stuck in'. Ministry is about getting stuck in wherever and with whomever and learning enormously from those with whom we get stuck in – those whom we meet have so much to give us". (B3.5)

Ministerial identity and location, belonging and exile.

There is a long conversation about what it is to be in a place but not of it as clergy (B3.12-20). Rick shares a powerful story of pretending to like the music mourners have chosen to remember their loved-one at a funeral, but secretly hating it and going home and playing Mozart – the divided inner nature of 'living with real people' (B3.13).

The poem also evokes a lot of sharing of vulnerability and the challenge of adaption – particularly on Janet's part, who talks about the idea she uses to make sense of her location on an outer-estate: "Praying in exile…God plants me in one place and then uproots into a different place" (B3.13). There is some valuable vocational wisdom which emerges here through the reflection on the poem: "I think for me it's acceptance with your eyes open, knowing what you are saying 'yes' to".

The poem teaches attention to context, appreciation of 'terroir'

The poem is effective in taking some readers into the context it describes, and this enables them to do the same for their own situation. So Janet says in her interview: "In 'A Prayer to Live With Real People' you have got all kinds of stuff (*laughs*) – it makes you think, you may not have people like in the poem, but there are people who would be quite graphic, particularly what have we got round here – the "doublet and hose outfit" as I call it and the big boots, there are fashions that you get in clothing and how people are – there are people at our Mid-week group, people who love pork dripping on toast, the poem is drawing you in to a world…" (IB2.6-7).

For Gary the poem facilitates a reflection on the temporary nature of ministerial immersion and belonging: "I think the most interesting thing this afternoon, which is of the poem but not out of it – which is how we clergy order our lives around these communities and then move on. I just thought that was very insightful".

In RPPG C3 the poem was contentious – Cora found it thrilling because she has personal links with the north-east, and from this perspective the poem displayed a delightful artistry as the poet's powers of acute observation and evocative description captured the scene for the reader. But the poet's stance was troubling for Christine and Suzy – the powers of description seem fraudulent if the poet's motivation in writing is not also spelled out: how is the reader to gauge the moral value of focussing on social difference? Is she patronising these people in calling them 'real'? Is she an 'inverted snob'? Is she in search of her own identity?

There is a remarkable sensitivity around the poet's relationship to difference, but taking it further into clergy relationships vis-a-vis difference in parish ministry was more tentative. It came up in a number of ways – having to negotiate the culture of Anglicanism – for example what to wear at a Bishop's Council residential; which people are our own 'tribe' when clergy seemingly have no roots or location – the notion of us as 'curating identity' wherever we find ourselves; searching for a vocational authenticity in ministry – who are we in that role in different places and cultures?

The poem is par excellence a display of poet as ethnographer writing into her poem her own search for self and identity as she observes a different culture in which she participates and yet stands outside looking in.

Is this a case where the poem needs to be put to work by the facilitator to enable a more candid and searching conversation to develop – for example through some questions which might help participants in making a link between the stance of the poem and their own ministerial perspective?

> In your ministry setting, are you an insider or an outsider?
>
> What do the parishioners in your setting value and esteem? What are their hopes and joys?
>
> What scene would you choose to describe the setting in which you live and work?
>
> Who are 'real people' for you?
>
> How do the people among whom you live see you? Imagine what they might say…

The poem enables participants to connect with contemporary experience in ministry and allows participants to tell personal history, how their own past relates to their present ministry. So Stevenson's poem evokes a range of responses, some of which are hostile to the stance of the poet and others appreciative. Participants use phrases like: "a search for authenticity", "patronizing", "outside", "snobbery", and "salt of the earth".

4.1c Reflections on 'Soho Road' by Benjamin Zephaniah

In contrast to RPPG A, where there was a highly critical appreciation of the poem's limited perspective on community, in RPPG B2 the poem seems to enable participants to construct a theology of place, of community, of social-historical sin, and of the importance of clergy appreciating the language, diversity and history of particular communities.

> Cath: I think for me it has to be the active creativity of God, and it is always a picture of the crucified and risen Christ.
>
> Gary: That second reading I have got a very strong sense of the tension between the individual and the community – this place as private space for everyone the place to be – so, this business about being….(*silence*)
>
> Janet: I think for me, because we have just celebrated fifty years of Girls Brigade in X on Saturday and Sunday, and a lot of the funerals that I do are people that have lived here since the estate was built and have known it since it was built – the "deep roots rooted everywhere" is something that resonates very strongly – and because I think of myself being uprooted by God from where I was and planted here my roots are here – so my roots are unsettling – I am not sure how deep my roots are here but they are deeper than they were last week or last year…
>
> Rick: I am struck by the vitality of the community, which may be influenced by the churches and the faiths, and people still remaining positive in the case of quite severe deprivation and difficulties, and yet together as a community.
>
> Peter: To me it's a very strong outward expression of the unity of Handsworth and the hope of the place. I feel a bit frustrated I would like to look inward a bit and see how he relates to his own community and, um, and if you use that sort

of Anglican thing – that's the sort of outward expression of being there for everyone, but you have also got to be the Vicar to the Christian community and to the, um, build that, so I suppose I am left with that contrast of how you have those two things together with integrity – so you are left with unity and diversity, how to live with the two things and hold them together and be distinctive, and not just a mish-mash of everything but make a distinctive contribution to the overall picture.

The poem takes people into the shadow-side of Birmingham history

Rick: Another layer of this and we were talking about The Manufactories – Birmingham was a big contributor to the slave trade wasn't it, the handcuffs the shackles – made in the Jewellery Quarter.

The poem becomes an heuristic – a spur for participants to discuss and 'witness to' the community it is describing. Participants see different aspects of the life of the community in the same poem.

The poem helps participants to do theology of place

B2.13 Cath: ….At the Olympic time in the park it was a glimpse of the Kingdom of Heaven because everyone was being polite, happy, there weren't problems…and it came over very much like that didn't it – Oh, that this is a place where everyone might get on – and this is the he sees the best of the Soho Road "Soho Road is where the heart beats"

Rick: This road has a beat it is in the atmosphere - the music

C: And when there is that beat, when there is that rhythm, when there is that togetherness then perhaps there is something of a glimpse of heaven when people are walking almost in step or whatever but as I say we can contrast that with what happened just over a year ago and that is a reality, isn't it, that is the reality of earth, that the Kingdom of Heaven is seen in such different terms, when there is a harmony, and sometimes that harmony is absolutely broken isn't it but this poem is about the time when it is in rhythm in beat in harmony

Gary: So that is the kingdom now but not yet, and sometimes it breaks through

C: Yes.

G: So you catch a glimpse of that and what the potential is and then the community is broken…yeah.

For C who knows the context well, the poem evokes the cultural vibrancy of the situation, but also the contemporary tensions arising from riots and animosity following the death of three Asian men in a car accident in 2012:

B2.7C: My gut reaction to it, as you read it, and not knowing when it was written, is that is the poem that the Soho Road needs in the light of last year's riots, because that is so close to where those three men died, and also there where some intense situations on the Soho Road, and also that the Sikhs guarded their temple in full ceremonial dress

with their swords…and that caused tension between them and the Afro-Caribbean community. And that is a poem which speaks of a unity that is fragile, but it is what is needed and people need to hear that because it brings things together…because you never know…I feel that at the moment the temperature is rising in the city because of police cuts and you just don't know what will happen next, and that is an optimistic poem.

In RPPG D the poem is also powerfully evocative of cultural diversity and the dynamism of community which the priest needs to appreciate for cure of souls.

Beatrix: For me this poem is such an explosion of stuff – it's a reminder that community is much more dynamic than organic, and much bigger than we are – you sometimes hear clergy talking about 'my parish', but it's not like that, you have to have humility in the face of all this stuff, and learn from it.

Paula: I love the music of the place, the atmosphere, the beat that makes it complete – I am called to be there, but also myth-busting – so engagement, and also disengagement (myth busting).

Paul: I guess I like 'the people now and people past' – the whole sense of story, and 'the heart-beat' – I wonder if I know where the heart-beat of my community is. Where is God at work? I wonder if I have missed it!

The poem draws attention to the particular character of language and place in ministry and pastoral encounter – the poem locates language in a specific culture

Zephaniah's poem celebrates the particularity of context – the poem points to the poetry of every-day speech in Handsworth, which connects with Cath's pastoral experience working there: "to me (the poem) reminds me of the senior citizens that I have encountered in and around that area and have actually this morning spent some time with a group – and because they speak slowly and thoughtfully there is a poetry in a way – that for me connects to this" (B2.21C).

Priests knowing the story of their churches and parishes – a sense of place undergirding ministry

When I used this poem with groups I have used it as a way of introducing how the priest knows his/her parish – like George Herbert had a feel for his country, and the call for us to know our places. Is that something that's true for priesthood in the C of E now? Is that still part of the role? Reflection on 'Soho Road' – a more contentious poem than I had realised – I presented it in a naïve way not really appreciating its bias, but the sense of priests knowing their patch resonated to a degree – e.g.: "I am not sure I could do my ministry with integrity unless I knew the story" (D6.6 Paul).

In RPPG D6 participants are able to describe their own working contexts – suburban, outer estate – in relation to the picture the poem paints of inner city – in some senses suggesting their own places have less community than the place the poem describes. The poem is the doorway into an articulation of the terroir of the different parishes and institutions represented in the room. This is perhaps the major feature of the conversation throughout the session – using the poem to make a comparison with their own settings, an heuristic device for getting clergy to reflect on their own 'patch' comparatively.

4.1d Reflections on 'In Church' by Thomas Hardy

My preconceptions around this poem were that it was disapproving of the performative in public ministry as being inauthentic and manipulative.

In RPPG A I was surprised by the talk about the value of rehearsal and rhetorical technique in ministry, and also the depth of vulnerability when participants shared personal insights into the role of emotion in ministry and how to handle it appropriately (e.g. A4.8 Michaela). In A4.8-9 John talks about the role of eye contact in ministering at funerals, memorising key details as well as names, including memorising 'variables' (such as location for the wake) so that you appear to be exceptionally pastorally concerned. "I am sincere but you have to be seen to be sincere too…I know my script and there is performance in that…One could say that this is a cheap trick but it's not, it's my attempt to make a connection with them. And I wonder if we can redeem the preacher (in the poem) and say that maybe his motive is actually about trying to make a connection with the congregation?"

In RPPG B participants talk of the artistry which they see in the poem as a valid part of liturgical ministry.

Liturgy as orchestration

B5.5 Janet: What I find interesting about this is to what extent…how you might orchestrate something –This is orchestration – some would say our liturgy is orchestration – which it is, but it's, you know, so that in terms of legitimacy – it raises a question doesn't it? In the liturgy I practiced the gestures before I was ordained priest and at the retreat before that I practiced walking around, practicing saying things off by heart…

Training and rehearsal in ministry formation

> B5.9 Janet: We use quite a lot of silence – I have trained people how to be silent – but that's orchestrated – that's trained to be at ease with silence.
>
> Cath: You've gone through a process to get there – and in any profession you go through a process, when you are in the presence of someone, a teacher for example, who seems to make it look so easy but in actual fact they have gone through a long process in detail preparing and everything else - and their lessons flow and that is the same in ministry grows and flows isn't it – ministry grows and flows…And when you get to that point the relationship between everyone present is a much more holy and reverent one than previously.

Reflection on how ministers worship in the liturgy

Can clergy worship when conducting liturgy? Is there professional distance even in liturgical ministry?

> B5.7 Gary: …often feel that by conducting a service we are not being ourselves, not able to enter the same space as the people attending the service.
>
> Rick: I imagine it's the same for every profession – watching another person do a service we are always going to look at how they are doing their job – not necessarily

critical but analytical, aren't we? I find it hard to worship in any church because I am watching how they do it.

Peter: Yes that's not my experience at all – I love it just attending a service, it's such a treat. I can really worship, and I am not aware of coming away wondering how they did it. Perhaps I do but mainly it is just sheer pleasure not being at the front.

Liturgical ministry as role rather than identity

B5.17 Peter: There is something strange about worship isn't there and preaching especially – plenty to laugh at! I often find myself in a role: I am in a role here – this is where I am now and I have just to do it.

Janet: That's how I approach it very much.

Rick: There's roles and roles, and worship and worship…How many of us worship in a parish communion you are being a bit more outward.

IB2.4 Janet: The one by Thomas Hardy I have been thinking about a lot because there is no way that you, well, that I can get away from the fact that I am performing but I am genuinely playing a part as well – particularly when I am taking a funeral – the public persona, the proclaiming, the being at ease, the performance to hold people – how important that is quite an art holding people but drawing them in – when people come out they say that was a lovely service, thank you, so sensitively done – thank God, the words themselves wouldn't have done it, it's how the words are said, it's how people are drawn in, I make it a sense of occasion, how I take the service, draw people in, how I respond to the needs of the people, looking out to the needs of the people in the front row including.

Authenticity, integrity as a public representative minister

IB2.8 Janet…this reflection about authenticity – I have been in situations where they are a priest and they think people don't think of them as priests, and I think they are kidding themselves because if you are a priest you are a public person and there is no way you can actually deny or cloak over the public person that you are – and trying to play a game like that…If I tried to do that I would get in a muddle – better for me to fully acknowledge that. So in that poem by Hardy, although the person knows they are a public person and they are playing a part, they are forgetting that there are always going to be a public person, even in private, and private may not be as private as you thought… If I am in a place of danger – if the part I am playing is far removed from the person I am in every respect, I am going to come unstuck. So that is a reflection that I have thought about a lot…I can't get away from that and it is something I have got to work with…

In RPPG C5 there are perceptions of the vulnerability of the preacher after the sermon – a surprising response to Hardy's poem which I had always read as critical of the preacher. Participants recall the time of silence after the sermon or walking to the next part in the liturgy – an exposing moment – experience of this gives these participants an element of sympathy for this preacher who is looking for reassurance that his sermon was good. Helen says: "For me, it's public/private face in ministry"; Suzy says: "The vulnerability of exposing yourself and all that it means".

In RPPG D there is subtle reflection on the fragility of church life; the flimsiness of boundaries between public and private, secure and insecure.

> Paul: The line I like is 'The Door swings softly ajar'. We might think we have things nicely held, but in life and in ministry nothing is ever quite 'held' or closed. Doors are always swinging softly ajar….

4.1e Reflections on 'A Priest at a Funeral' by Manon Ceridwen James

NB This poem was not presented in RPPG A or B

The power of a poem to tap emotion in relation to personal experience

The poem's use of the midwife analogy has a strong effect on Nancy, which she acknowledges has its roots in her own personal relationships and circumstances – her relationship with her own mother, and her not having the experience of bearing children. In one sense Nancy imports the feelings from elsewhere, but on another level the poem has drawn them out in relation to ministerial identity and practice.

The poem is an interesting example of how two people can react in different ways to the same word(s). For Cora the metaphor of *midwife* for ministry at a funeral connects positively with the historical reality of personal experience. So it makes sense as an interpretation of ministry:

> "Obviously the birth thing is part of my experience, and I have had that relationship with the midwife which has to be one of complete…just as I feel when someone is putting a funeral into my hands of someone they love – I had to put all my bits and pieces in to her hands. And it's a similar sort of action (trusting a priest to undertake the funeral of a loved one), handing over something that is so important to you…It's the two extremes of life – it speaks to my experience because I have been at the place, but if it doesn't then it's not going to…you know…"

For Nancy the metaphor connects in a different way – it touches on sensitivities in personal experience – and from this perspective is inappropriate as language to describe ministry.

> "I think that's why, it's really important for you to hear that this is personal for me… [*sensitive material removed*] …Of course I am going to have a strong reaction to it. Particularly when for me all those things all you said about the miracle of life – for me God is the maker of the miracle not the woman, and I don't like that the woman is terribly clever here because women have been having babies for thousands of years and animals have babies, and I really apologise for this, It's not that clever, It's not being an artist, and most of the teenage girls I worked with…it's mostly about being quite stupid."

The tension between these two participants is not located in a difference about the appropriate use of language, but about what is constructed around that language in terms of ministerial identity and the cultural significance that certain sets of behaviours, experiences or status is accorded within the Church.

The difficulty of 'the clever abstract'

> Suzy: There's something about this poem that just doesn't connect for me I am wondering if it's too clever for me – it's like my engaging with poetry is that it's a bit navel gazing and It's a bit arty farty and other derogatory terms I can't quite say…but this is frankly too clever paralleling life and death in the language it has chosen to use (C2.9).
>
> Nancy: It is a particular kind of poetry isn't it, it's the kind that if you didn't have the title…
>
> Suzy: Yes!
>
> Nancy: Because we had to do this exercise about thinking what is it about poetry I like, I spent some time thinking about why is it that I like some kinds of poetry and not others, and it's because of this kind of poetry which is all very abstract – and we have all been a priest at a funeral and it gives us a way in, but actually to the casual reader – I like the kind of poetry the more I read it I get more.
>
> Suzy: The more I read this the less I get from it, whereas usually the more I get from it. The only thing I take from it is, I like that final phrase 'chanting', because that is what I am doing as a priest.
>
> Nancy: although the clever abstract is a bit irritating to me because it feels like you are saying you are cleverer than I am - I don't really like this woman very much – she has written some beautiful lines which speak of ministry – but there is something in me which is resisting…(C2.16-17).

The power of a poem to tap hidden reservoirs of emotion in relation to ministry

The phrase 'sculpt space' is very evocative for the participants – not only as a descriptor for funeral ministry, but for all ministerial roles where there is the multi-dimensional task of holding and facilitating a community and a formal process in an attentive and well-ordered way – such as teaching (Nancy) or any liturgical ministry. In RPPG D2 there is a conversation which illustrates how effective a poem can be in helping participants connect with their experience of ministry, and the emotions stored away in relation to that. This incident is an indication of the power of poetry to evoke experience which may be buried under professional competence – also an indication of what clergy holding together – their own emotions and personal history alongside the emotions of others.

> Beatrix: "sculpt space and hold the shifting fragile colours" which I find myself trying to do, and it helps to have it named.
>
> All: Mmmmm.
>
> James: I am quite struck by "to let it fall through my fingers" something about how to deal with this stuff.
>
> Paula: That's exactly the line – and partly it's about the person themselves – to let that person go, and then you as a priest to let that person go – the intensity of that one funeral.

Beatrix: And we are not in charge.

Paul: Much as we would like to be.

Faith: That's the midwife – caressing women in their own artistry because they are doing the work – usually – for me all the way through it's about texture, about touch, about being engaged not standing apart, engaged in the very stuff of what's going on.

Paul: The costly nature of it – rage, calm, the colours, fragments of courage – it speaks to me of the cost of being, the cost of being the priest at a funeral, emotionally and spiritually, perhaps time-wise…the price paid by the priest who does this.

[*sound of violin from music lesion taking place in the next room*]

And the recovery required for something to put back in the bank to replace what we have paid out in all we have said and experienced and heard.

Faith: And will we need emotional outburst sometimes. I remember I took my father in law's funeral, it was a secular funeral, walked out and sat on the step and…….just collapsed….it had to come out…

[*Faith begins to cry*… I began to see the value of including the reference to Pastoral Care Adviser in the Participant Information Sheet. Participants are emotionally vulnerable as they own stories/memories emerge.]

4.1f Reflections on 'Visitor' by Les Murray

For participants in RPPG A5, the poem connected with Scripture in a unique way, perhaps because the narrative surrounding the visit which is the focus of the poem is left undescribed and to the imagination of the reader. The poem leaves space for a more spiritual or theological form of imagining to play with the sparseness of the poem. So participants wonder is the poem about The Annunciation? (A5.19), the visit of the Magi in Matthew's Gospel, or perhaps reflections on a visit as a "catalyst for change" – as in Luke's Gospel, where every visit an occasion of change (A5.20).

For Matthew the poem connects with prayer: "For me this is a poem about the life of prayer…about the prayer of silence…the uncertainty in silence…the business about the Spirit speaking and not speaking" (A5.10) which fosters a long dialogue about the poem as an analogy for prayer as intimate encounter – "I am now thinking about Newman…Cor ad cor loquitor…(heart speaks to heart)…and about Augustine 'My heart is restless 'til it finds its rest in you'…" (A5.10-11 John), and also about the theology of incarnation – Shirley is reminded of John's Prologue: "He came and camped among us" (A5.11). Is the visitor Christ knocking on humanity's door? Or is it Christ who opens the door to the seeking heart? Is this the Holy Spirit coming to the heart like a lover (Song of Songs)?

The sparse economy of the poem invites Shirley to play with its gendered nature: "I have been wondering what happens if *she* knocks at the door and listens to *her* heart approaching" (A4.12), which infuriates Matthew (A5.18). Michaela comments on "the ambiguity – the host, the guest, who is the visitor? And the stuff that has been drawn out – that the encounter

changes everybody" and Shirley says "I think it's sort of similar with me – that however much we have talked about it, um, it is still, sort of, there are depths to be plumbed with it".

In RPPG C4 I decided to share a poem of my own choice in the sharing session C4 to make the event more collaborative – to offer something of myself into the process. Also because I was interested in learning what this group might make of the Les Murray poem I introduced it as a reflection on the visits we make as priests, and the vulnerability and unpredictability of what might lie on the other side once the door is opened. A number of strands in a conversation followed (C4. 17-21):

The priest making God apparent

People's encounter with the priest can signify something of God to them – for good or ill. This is especially acute for ministry outside Christian community. Nancy says: "…I used to be really aware when I was a chaplain that people see God when they see me not because I am good but because I am the only contact they have with him – in a parched land I am walking round with a bottle of water – it's not that I have something amazing – it's just that they have so little".

Integrity in ministry apparent to others

There is also a conversation about ministerial integrity and what this communicates of God to others. The poem evokes memories about an alcoholic man who knocks at the vicarage door early on Christmas morning (i.e. the middle of the night!). They discuss "what is the appropriate response for clergy?". It enables reflection on ethical practice as clergy faced with demands on them. Nancy says: "This guy is an alcoholic and has lots of support, he isn't homeless and hungry, it's complicated, and how you show Christ's love in every situation is complicated". Cora's comment about the unrecognised goodness of clergy is searing: "You can do things that reveal God but if *who* you are doesn't fit...". Prejudice and strangulating expectations can stifle ministry. Again the poem inspires a theological reflection about the divine presence and action: Where is God located in the poem? Which side of the door? Is it a poem about Incarnation, and incarnational ministry?

Appendix 4.2 Participant invitation to bring a poem of their own choice

>From: MarkP
>Date: /2012 10:44
>To: Reflective Practice Poetry Research Group B participants
>Subj: RE: poetry reflection group

Dear *N*,

I am about to go off on a Developing Ministry residential so I am sending a reminder about our next session of the poetry reflection group at s vicarage on Tuesday 1.30-2.30pm, with Lunch from 12.30m

For your convenience I am attaching the participant information of the research project so you can familiarise yourself with my research aims and also the working principles for the group session.
The following session will be on Tuesday , 12.30 lunch with session 1.30-2.30pm at *N*'s vicarage.

For the session I would like to invite you to spend our hour's reflection in a slightly different way:
I am inviting each member of the group to select and bring with you one poem which you find helpful in reflecting on your ministry. This is a genuine invitation and not an obligation, so if you do not have a poem to bring that is OK.
If you do have a poem to share for reflection, please would you be prepared to read it to the group - it would help to have a copy for each participant (i.e. six copies in all.)
Then to say briefly how or why you find it helpful for reflecting on your own experience of ministry.
The group can then respond to each poem in turn.
If each of us is able to bring one poem we will have time to give 10 minutes to each person's chosen poem, and if there are fewer than 6 poems we can give more time to each one.
Please let me know if you have any queries about the above invitation.

The final group session will be on Tuesday 8th 2013.

I very much look forward to seeing you again.
As ever
Mark

Participant choice of poem: a reflection

The session in which participants bring a poem of their own choosing to share in the group offers the opportunity to examine the contribution of poetry in clergy reflective-practice from a perspective which is different from that of other sessions. In the latter, poems are selected by the researcher, and so it might be that in the minds of the participants they are 'weighted' by this consideration. Perhaps the participants feel obligated to find significance in a poem because it has been designated as somehow valuable by virtue of its selection. They may see the researcher as an expert in poetry or in reflective practice and so defer to his supposed specialist knowledge. Or they may feel he is ignorant and his choices suspect. Indeed, there

may be all kinds of reactions to the researcher in the participants which influence their response to the poems he is presenting – issues of gender, class or race, or a perception of theological or ecclesial allegiance. Of course all these considerations may also apply to the response participants make to a poem presented by another participant.

In introducing 'their poem' to the group, most participants gave a rationale for their choice. Most of these introductions suggest that the poem had a prior association with a significant person, place or time in their lives. These associations give an indication of the sources of access and exposure to poetry in participants' lives, and represent a sample of the resources which nourish clergy in their continuing ministerial formation. Presenting clergy also talked in different ways about the poem. Some focussed on the form and language of the poem itself, and others on its significance for them in relation to the practice of ministry – pastoral concerns, current involvements in a variety of settings, theological priorities and the spirituality which undergirds their ministerial identity and practice. Responses to the poems and to the input of the presenting participant around their poem varied both in apparent levels of engagement, resonance or challenge. My own role as facilitator of the group also varied. In RPPG C.4, participant Suzy's presentation of 'Gift' by R.S. Thomas told of how she had encountering it during a recent Quiet Day with her congregation led by a lay woman in the church.

Gift

R. S. Thomas Collected Poems 1945-1990, London: J. M. Dent.

Suzy was drawn to the form of this poem – specifically, its brevity – and because of the way in which she found it 'spoke' to her about the overwhelming grace of God flowing from small places. She interpreted the pool of grace to be vulnerable congregations like her own, few in number but a source of blessing. In reflecting on the poem, Suzy went on to affirm her vocation to ordained ministry exercised as the cure of souls in places which are easily overlooked in a Church culture which esteems numerically large and socially sophisticated churches.

C4.4S I am very rooted – people always make jokes don't they "You'll be a bishop one day" and I think "No!" I am a parish priest and I will always be a parish

> priest – that is my calling – to say this is my small pond and whoever I am with I will think the world of them, I will love them and actually whatever gets thrown at me as a result of that, God will sustain me the more I dive in and explore and actually God does provide in a way which I have never articulated…yeah…sustaining me…no wonder I am getting grey hair.

The responses of participants to the presentation of the poem interested me in a number of ways. My own role as facilitator was to ask a 'deepening question' about how Suzy interpreted a particular phrase in the poem (which I mis-quoted!) In response to this Suzy went on to develop her reflection a little more. Other participants' responses helped Suzy refine the theology of divine love which seemed to be implied in her reflection on the poem, and also to appreciate the form and language of the poem itself.

Appendix 4.3 Summary of participant review Questionnaire RPPG C

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

'The Poetry of Priesthood' Research Project: REVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE.

Summary

1. THE REFLECTION GROUP IN WHICH YOU WERE A PARTICIPANT:

RPPG C Residential *2013*

2. HOW REWARDING WERE THE REFLECTION SESSIONS FOR YOU?

unrewarding very rewarding

1 2 3 4 x 5

3. WHAT HAVE YOU FOUND VALUABLE IN THE EXPERIENCE?

A: re-igniting my love of poetry and

the opportunity to gain more out of poems in a group than as individuals

B: The opportunity to have time and space to reflect without boundaries

and exclusively with other priests.

Helped especially that they are people I know and trust.

Long enough to really follow a thread of thought through to its conclusion.

C: Being able to listen and share.

Having plenty of time.

D: Finding and developing common experiences on themes

and seeing the vulnerability of priesthood and insecurity which is nothing new but has been with others.

Reflections on shaping the space and the sacramental act of holding all together.

E: Hearing the perspectives of others.

Realising how much context and experience matter in the hearing of things.

4. WHAT HAVE YOU FOUND LESS HELPFUL?

A: sometimes hard to say what you thought with a group so willing to contribute

B: Nothing.

C: [blank]

D: The poem by the American woman.

E: Our tendency to fill in all the gaps with chatter and our tendency to be side-tracked sometimes.

5. WHAT ASPECTS OF THE SESSIONS HAVE HELPED YOU REFLECT ON THE PRACTICE OF MINISTRY?

A: Looking at particular themes, like 'priesthood'

and other aspects of ministry – e.g. preaching, and funerals.

B: Being with other priests.

Being free to wander away from the poem to reflect on ministry.

C: The variety of perspectives.

The possibility of being honest.

The excuse that we are doing this to help someone else (i.e. the researcher).

D: I have been able to appreciate poetry once someone else started to open it up to me (see Q.3).

Seeing how integrated the nature of priesthood is with the job of being a parish priest.

E: The hearing of the poem read aloud.

Being with people with whom I felt safe.

6. WHAT IS DISTINCTIVE FOR YOU ABOUT POETRY AS A FOCUS OR TOOL FOR REFLECTION?

A: Poetry is often more emotive and "heart" than other tools for reflection.

It is less prescriptive and fenced-in, and so a greater range of exploration is encouraged.

B: A good starting point to provoke a conversation.

Not sure I reflect on poetry in the same way on my own; being with others is what has made this distinctive.

C: The external focus of reflection.

The fact that interpretation does not go along with church tradition preventing us from being either tribal or concerned for others.

D: ? I am unsure if poetry is distinctive in its own right but is a tool amongst others (see below).

E: It speaks of the inexplicable and the indefinable – the knowing that is inner – not fact!

7. HOW DO POEMS COMPARE TO OTHER ART FORMS AS A MEANS FOR YOUR REFLECTION ON YOUR MINISTRY? e.g. pictures, sculpture, films, literature, anecdotes, music.

A: For me poems can be easily linked to art (especially collage), where words and themes can be cut and pasted together in new and meaningful ways.

B: I like that a poem is quite small. If reflecting on film or TV, for example, the themes can sometimes be too big.

Something about having words evokes a different reflection to music or art.

Starting with someone else's reflection really helps.

C: Until this exercise I had not realised how integrated poetry was into life and ministry, pictures and films – e.g. often include or reference poetry.

I suppose anecdotes would be where I most commonly encounter reflection on ministry.

D: I normally use films or music as reflection, now I see how films and music can be poetic in their reflection, and how poetry can be rhythmic and pictorial.

E: I have always found that all art forms help me to reflect, but I think poetry is particularly good in a group situation.

8. HAS ANYTHING CHANGED FOR YOU AS YOU HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THE REFLECTION GROUP?

A: I've been challenged by both the process and content of the group – e.g. group dynamics, and especially about the role and perception of "priesthood".

B: Have remembered how much I like poetry.

C: All sorts of small things – I feel I have grown in my appreciation of and ability to reflect on ministry.

D: Not so much changed as reaffirmed and supported.

I can now see myself using poetry as a reflective practice with others as it starts with the poem and not with navel-gazing.

By being in a group others help you open the poem up.

E: I think assumptions are challenged, and am far more aware of how others' context and experience make for vast differences in perspective – especially re: motherhood.

9. WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE MORE GENERALLY OF CLERGY REFLECTION IN GROUPS?

A: Especially in a more "academic" context it can become a forum for people to share obscure or difficult theologies that have no relevant or practical applications.

B: This is the best reflection group I have ever participated in.

C: Either anxious-making, or dull.

D: Crap! They are normally negative environments and too inward looking.

E: It largely depends on the group!

However, I think it is rare that one feels able to be absolutely honest – there is usually some holding back.

10. HOW HAS POETRY AS A RESOURCE ENABLED YOU TO ENGAGE IN A DIFFERENT KIND OF LISTENING/ CONVERSATION/ REFLECTION?

A: Taking just a word or phrase can open up a whole new layer of thoughts and reflections (and giving space for God to speak).

B: Enabled a very open conversation.

If we had just been asked to reflect for an hour on funerals, for example, I don't think it would have had the same depth or resonance.

C: I think it has been very liberating.

We've been free to express thoughts, try out ideas, bounce off and back to the poem.

D: Because the reflection starts with a poem it helps you identify at a different level about who I am and what I am as a priest for myself and others.

A poem might start with a subject you would gloss over or avoid.

E: I think it has enabled us to begin in a new place – on neutral ground and work towards our own experience – far more healthy.

11. IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY IF YOU WERE ORGANISING THE REFLECTION GROUP?

A: With a group of people so willing to speak, either more silence or smaller group/paired work would have enabled more time for each voice to be heard or thought.

B: No.

C: No.

D: Crisps and dips! More toast, and gin.

In reality no, I wouldn't change a thing and it was great – the level and freedom of talking and insight. The hours flew by.

E: No – it has been wonderful! Thank you.

12. IS THERE ANYTHING MORE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY?

A: Thank you!

B: Thank you. It's been really wonderful.

C: No.

D: Thank you.

E: A valuable experience – food for a great deal of thought and reflection.

Where is the skylight going to go?

13. TODAY'S DATE all responses 12th March 2013

If you have any queries about this Questionnaire or would value a further conversation about any aspect of the Reflection Group please contact Mark Pryce:

Appendix 4.4 Protocol for RPPG group review session

Group Reflection Questions:

Thank you very much for completing the Review Questionnaires.

This is just an opportunity for our final half hour to have a conversation about the experience of the Poetry Reflection Group as a group of participants, and any insights that you have got about poetry and how it's been.

In a way it may perhaps feel a bit like a repeat of what you have just done but because we have gone through this together as a group, it's a chance to think it through as a conversation.

Thinking back over the five sessions…

Q. How has it been for you; what's occurred for you during the sessions?

Q. Were there aspects of how the poems were 'handled' which helped or hindered?

Q. What kind of reflection has the poetry stimulated?

Q. Was it the poems themselves, or the group process, which has influenced this?

Q. Has being part of the group impacted on your approach to ministry or your practice?

Q. From your experience of this process, what contribution can poetry make to Clergy CMD?

Q. Anything else you would like to say?

Appendix 4.5 Research poetry

The value of research poetry in analysing the significance of the gender dynamics of RPPG C as a dimension of the reflective context in which poetry is interpreted

These were particularly significant, given that all five participants recruited by the CME Officer of that diocese were female, and that she was herself a participant.

As researcher I was conscious of gender issues from two perspectives: first, with regard to how participants in the group would relate to one another as an all-women group. Second, I was aware of gender difference as facilitator and the only male participant (given that the Neutral Observer is not expected to join in the conversation!). I was alert to issues of how this would affect the character of the group and my style of facilitation.

I had attended to this in advance by re-thinking my choice of poetry in light of an all-woman group, introducing James' poem 'Priest at a funeral', but the tone and character of the group was, initially at least, very different from those I had encountered before. This is summed up for me by the image of what I call the 'research chocolates'. The group session took place in the sitting room of the retreat house, sitting in easy chairs around a coffee table on which the PC was positioned. One of the participants had brought a large box of chocolates which was positioned in the middle of the table. Participants took one from time to time. Whilst this did not prove to be a major distraction, I was a little thrown by it at the outset, and record that I was asking questions such as 'What was the shared chocolate saying about the participants' expectations of the group experience?... Was this actually a group of friends and associates?' My lack of prior knowledge of the participants and their pre-existing connections was emphasised to me by this box of chocolates. I was also conscious that there might be an approach to this experience which was being given an ethos or character not set by me as facilitator/researcher – for example, the gendered nature of the group seemed to be emphasised by these chocolates: this is a group of women priests meeting to be in conversation with one another. Of course male clergy eat chocolate too, but bringing a large box of chocolates to the session felt to me like a particularly feminine action, and I became aware of my sex and more conscious of my gendered approach to the running of the group as a man.

After the residential I wrote the poem 'Research chocolates' as a reflection upon the gender dynamics of the group and also the vulnerability of the researcher as he feels his way into an uncharted group and roots it in the work which is, for him at least, its primary purpose and rationale for him as researching professional. This is a revised version of the first auto-ethnographic poem, drafted in April 2013 during transcription and analysis of the residential:

Research chocolates

They arrive, entirely un-recruited,

To laughter of acclaim,

Brought like something lifted out of Christmas afternoon:

A £10 box of *Thornton's Continental*,

Now the biggest presence in the room.

Placed there on the table in-between us

What do they say, these self-selecting chocolates?

They are fuel for a marathon, perhaps?

For bolstering resilience?

Are they compensation, or reward, for duty being done?

Is this a gesture of anticipated fun?

Will participants become party-cipants,

A group confected round a focus

Other than my own?

Sugar and spice and all things nice:

Is it only girls that have the courage for such extravagance and pleasure,

subverting the clinical?

These chocolates are like dancers in a supermarket; picnickers on the verge of a motorway.

Each sweet brown beauty nestling in its moulded plastic pod

Could my fat and clumsy fingers find a way of easing one

Out from its snug place, even if invited (as a man)

To sample that which can be seen and shared,

Felt and touched and tasted?

Appendix 4.6 Register of data gathering, transcription, analysis and secure storage

Session	Recorded	Stored/ Secured	Field Notes	Transcribed	Store/ Secure	Analysis	Store/ Secure	
A.1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
A.2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
A.3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
A.4	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
A.5	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
A.Intv.1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
A.Intv.2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
B. IQ	x	x		x	x	x	x	
B.1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
B.2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
B.3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
B.4	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
B.5	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
B.Intv.1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
B.Intv.2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
C. IQ	x	x		x	x	x	x	
C.1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
C.2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
C.3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
C.4	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
C.5	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
C.6 Rev	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
C. RQ	x	x		x	x	x	x	
C.Intv.1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
D IQ	x	x		x	x	x	x	
D.1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
D.2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
D.3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
D.4	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
D.5	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
D.6 Rev	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
D. RQ	x	x		x	x	x	x	

Appendix 4.7 Colour-coding in data analysis



APPENDICES - CHAPTER SIX

Appendix 6.1 **'Litter Stick'**: Euros Bowen (1993, 27).

Appendix 6.2 Trans-disciplinary implications

6.2a Poetry for Reflective Practice in Counselling

Participant comments on poetry and metaphor in counselling within assignments for a University of Warwick Module

The group included qualified counsellors doing the top-up BA programme – forwarded by tutor Alison Paris after she had drawn on poems as a reflective resource in a session following our conversations about the role of poetry in CME and CPD.

'We were challenged to think of how we were feeling and to put some words down. I found this to be helpful in listening to myself and I was able to do this by letting words flow from my mind. I was amazed…. I felt lifted in engaging in the experience….it has reaffirmed…that I do trust myself to be able to hear myself. This is enriching in bringing to the surface my experiencing of myself'.

'The possibilities became endless for working with people living with dementia ….playing with language or uncovering a metaphor. Researchers have realized that people with dementia often speak in metaphor, concealed within apparent inaccuracies…these can uncover even deeper meaning to a careful listener'.

'Writing poetry connects us in imagination, memory and thought and invokes auditory and visual senses'.

'Creative, expressive and reflective (poetry, stories, exploring images) writing is another approach I have used in my development and I continue with this. I find it therapeutic and it releases my thoughts and feelings – at times also when it has felt too difficult to verbalise these. I am able to reflect on what I have written and it supports my development and well-being. I often encourage clients to explore writing therapy, particularly when …offering brief workplace counselling'.

6.2b Poetry for Reflective Practice in Theological Education for Ministry

Sent:
To: Mark Pryce
Subject: RE: Priesthood and Poetry feedback session

Dear Mark,
I had a proper read through of your document on the train, and found it absolutely fascinating. I thought it was a very accurate account and perceptive interpretation – issues such as economy of language, poetry as a mirror, etc., certainly came up in our group. I also thought it was interesting that our group had a moment of conflict (which you describe on p79) which would seem to imply that poetry can evoke a very strong personal response. So yes, everything resonates, and I can't think of anything which is missing.

You ask about any impact on my ministry/teaching. I think there has been an impact. I have regularly (but not frequently!) used hymnody in teaching. This has mainly been with my Church History hat on – as a starter for ten students can look at a famous Wesley hymn and tease out what they think the main points of his theology are, or similarly in a patristic context I have asked students to compare Christologies and spot heresies in different hymns. However, that has been essentially doctrinal. My use of poetry was fairly infrequent – I think I told you that I had used

Benjamin Zephaniah's *Soho Road*, but what I probably didn't say was that I used it alongside newspaper articles and so the emphasis was probably on the particular voice and viewpoint.

Since the poetry sessions I have found myself using more poems as a springboard for pastoral reflection, including (I confess!) the RS Thomas *Sick Visits*. How would I express the change? I suppose the sessions have given me more confidence to use poetry to elicit a reflective response on students'own ministerial practice as opposed to using poetry to explore the viewpoint of the poet. Hope that makes some sort of sense! Best wishes,

6.2c Poetry for Reflective Practice in Spiritual Direction

Poetry & Spiritual Direction:
Using poems as a way of reflecting on our practice as spiritual directors and companions,
Led by Mark Pryce

10.10 Welcome by John, any notices, some quiet, then Introduction to the day from Mark.

10.15 Groups for Reflective Practice: Using a poem as our way today of reflecting on our practice as spiritual directors and companions. Mark to bring 25 copies of Heaney's 'The Skylight'.

Groups – 4/5 people. Four groups? (20 minutes)

10.40 Plenary – reporting back.

11.05 Mark's input on his research; how clergy respond to poetry; metaphors breaking into new understandings; no clear conclusions from a poem – some people like puzzles, some don't; etc.

11.30 Break

11.50 Inputs by three practitioners on ways in which they use poems in S/D.

10 minutes for each (including reading & feedback)

12.20 Nicola Slee reading her own poems, and relating them to ministry of spiritual direction.

12.40 Any notices – close. Eat and network.

To: Mark Pryce
Subject: Re: Forum

Thanks Mark.
I have put together the resources used on the day, and they will be coming round to Forum members. I hope I have respected the Heaney copyright enough by simply pointing people to one of the hundreds of places on the Web where it can be found.... I have had very good comments about the morning, especially about the way that you led it and used the Heaney poem to help us concentrate on our practice from the start. Many thanks for what you did in an autumn of busy work...yours, .