



# Women, The State of Play

Analytical Reflection on 20  
Interviews in the Diocese of  
Leicester



October 2020

# **Women, The State of Play**

---

Analytical Reflection on 20 Interviews  
in the Diocese of Leicester

October 2020

# Bishops' Foreword

We are deeply grateful to Karen Rooms, Women's Ministry Enabler, and to the Diocese of Leicester Women's Ministry Working Group for the work that has gone into this excellent report. Although the publication has been delayed by the pandemic and lockdown, it is a timely reminder both of the importance of thorough research to inform our decision making, and also of the journey we have begun, but certainly not completed, to ensure the flourishing of the ministry of women in the diocese. We are also grateful to Nick Ladd who has acted as a 'critical friend' in reviewing the report and giving an external perspective on the questions we need to ask ourselves in the diocese.

The report makes for uncomfortable reading. We have come a long way in recent years, but the report highlights how easy it is to become complacent. With the appointment of Bishop Guli, the first ever female bishop in the history of the Diocese of Leicester, and the appointment of Archdeacon Claire, the first ever female archdeacon, and with the Bishop's Leadership Team nearing a 50/50 split of men and women, it would be easy to assume that we have reached our goal and everything else will automatically fall into place. However, while it is important to celebrate how far we have come, it is also critical to acknowledge the deep pain still being experienced by many in the diocese.

In particular, we want to acknowledge the deep pain which surrounded the 2019 '3rd ordination service'. Although the two of us had long discussions in early 2019 about how to approach the ordinations, we failed to communicate well with those involved and with the wider diocese to give the reasons for our decisions and to acknowledge the pain that we knew these decisions would cause. We don't believe this pain could have been entirely avoided - it is all part of the settlement reached by the Church of England in 2014 around the 'five guiding principles' - but with hindsight, we know that we could have done a lot more to prepare people for the service and to care for people as news about the service spread. Bishop Martyn as Diocesan Bishop carries ultimate responsibility for this, and he has already apologised privately to those most closely involved, including Bishop Guli. He now wants to put this apology on record and to say that should this situation arise again, he will look again at how the practicalities for such a service are managed.

Those ordained in the '3rd service' were all serving in parishes which have not asked for 'extended episcopal oversight' i.e. they are not in the same position as some of our 'traditional catholic' parishes which have extended oversight from the Bishop of Richborough (this is 'extended oversight' because Bishop Martyn remains their diocesan bishop and the Bishop of Richborough operates by delegation from the Bishop of Leicester). Therefore, it was primarily because these 'complementarian evangelical' parishes and individuals had not asked for another bishop to oversee them, that Bishop Martyn felt it right to conduct the ordinations himself. As this report shows, there are many in the diocese who disagree with this decision as well as many who wonder why the Church of England has such complicated arrangements.

However, the fact remains that there are deep disagreements within the Church of England, and many tough questions about how we remain one body, while also holding very different views on key topics. But as your bishops, we want to be clear on our commitment to do everything possible to enable the flourishing of all women (lay and ordained) together with those who, for theological reasons, cannot accept the ordination of women. It is because we want all to flourish, that we will not avoid the tough decisions, even though we know that the cost of these decisions falls unevenly on different people.

We sincerely hope and pray that this report will be widely read, studied and discussed within the diocese. This is a matter for us all. And we are also committed to ensuring that the recommendations of the report are enacted. This will require courage and determination, not least because there is so much change in the church at the moment. But we are firmly resolved that these recommendations will be taken up by ourselves as bishops, by the Bishop's Leadership Team and God-willing, with your cooperation, by all in the diocese.

In the Spring of 2021, the national church will also be publishing a review of the 'five guiding principles'. This will need to feed into our local discussions. The review will include some rich theological reflections as well as further suggestions for action.

Meanwhile, we remain deeply grateful to all those who exercise ministry in this diocese, particularly at this time of great turmoil in church and society. May God grant us all strength to persevere.

+ Marty Leicester

+ Guli Loughborough

# Preface

The purpose of this report is to stimulate further conversation about the ministry of women in the Diocese of Leicester and effect change. We hope it will guide how we embody the Five Guiding Principles; add focus to the development of women in ministry, and lead to changes in culture that contribute to the wellbeing and affirmation of women in ministry in the Diocese.

35% of the ordained ministers serving in the Diocese of Leicester are women (excl.PTO) and of 96 clergy of incumbent status, 28% are women. In recognised lay ministries 58% Readers, 60% Pioneers, 31% Evangelists and 85% Pastoral Assistants are female. Of 234 parishes, 6% are under the extended episcopal oversight of the Bishop of Richborough (11) or have passed a resolution under the 2014 Measure without seeking extended oversight (2, on the grounds that the diocese currently has a male diocesan bishop).

Two significant events in 2019 provide the context of this research. In June women celebrated 25 years of ordained ministry in the Cathedral. This was particularly poignant for the first cohort ordained as priests in 1994 who were ordained locally in their parishes. Weeks later, following the regular ordinations of Deacons and Priests, an additional ordination service was held in the Cathedral for three evangelical ordinands who requested that +Martyn, a male bishop, ordain them in place of +Guli, the female 2019 ordaining Bishop.

The research is important as the first research for 20 years describing the experiences of, and attitudes towards, women's ministry in the Diocese. It follows 5 years after the provision in the Church in 2014 for female episcopacy and the accompanying Five Guiding Principles, as clergy and parishes live with these changes and the Diocese seeks to live with and honour difference and minority theological positions. Secondly, this research offers a broad and authoritative snapshot of the current state of play. Seeking the flourishing of all lay and ordained ministries in the Diocese across difference, and using appreciative enquiry, the Women's Ministry Working Group devised 8 questions to record the views and experience of people invested in our diocesan common life. A representative sample was constructed (see Demographics p10) and an external reader asked to analyse the interviews. We are confident that this research is a reliable reference point for future actions, beyond the voices of those who are most invested in the issues.

The implication of this report is that action is required across the whole diocesan system. Reports habitually offer an interesting read for the curious and invested. If we are committed to equality for women, this research needs to be taken seriously and its recommendations acted upon at every level.

The circumstances in which the Church finds herself in 2020 feel momentous, and the gospel invitation to keep finding new ways to love our neighbours is being renewed. This research sits alongside, and is a sister to, #blacklivesmatter and the publication of the Living in Love and Faith resources, and may be part of the Spirit's invitation to us to give attention to love that is always being made new as we engage with equality, diversity and inclusion in our institution.

Rev'd Canon Karen Rooms, Women's Ministry Enabler, Diocese of Leicester, October 2020

# Acknowledgements

Without the frankness, thoughtful honesty, moving reflections and hospitality of self offered by those who were interviewed, this report would not be giving voice to the lived experience of men and women in ministry in the Diocese. I am deeply grateful to those who gave generously of their time and themselves: convictions, pain, joy, memories, questions, passion, fears and hopes. Thank you.

This work has been undertaken by the Diocese of Leicester's Women's Ministry Working Group, who are : Jackie Wainwright, Claire Bampton, and the Rev'd's Morna Simpson, Alison Roche, Elizabeth York, Rosie Woodall, and Karen Rooms. Your commitment to revealing and enriching our common life has been unwavering. Thank you for the questions, interviewing, writing up, reflecting, observations, challenge, conclusions, executive summary, final design presentation of the research, your courage and your grace.

Our partnership with Revd Nick Ladd has been incredibly helpful: thank you for your work. Our methodology draws strongly from the work of Church Innovations <https://www.churchinnovations.org>  
Partnership for Missional Church <https://churchmissionsociety.org/churches/partnership-missional-church/>

Finally, this work is offered in the lively tradition of Diocesan Deans and Advisors in Women's Ministry in the Church of England, who resource and inspire our institution, with special thanks to +Ruth and +Sarah, DAWMs who inspired and encouraged my ministry.

Karen Rooms

# Contents

Executive Summary	6
Recommendations	8
Analytical Reflection on 20 Interviews - Nick Ladd	
Introduction, Demographics, Research Practice, Analytical Process, Comment	10-11
Q1: Tell a story about when you experienced God through the ministry of a woman	13
<i>Responses</i>	14
<i>Questions to Consider</i>	16
Q2: Tell How you – and the congregation you belong to – feel about changes in the place of women in the Church over the last 25 years.	17
<i>Responses</i>	18
<i>Questions to Consider</i>	22
Q3: Describe how women participate in church	23
<i>Responses</i>	24
<i>Questions to Consider</i>	26
Q4: Where have you seen women given respect and recognition in the church?	27
<i>Responses</i>	28
<i>Questions to Consider</i>	31
Q5: How do people flourish in church life. Tell a story about someone (any gender) flourishing.	32
<i>Stories</i>	33
<i>Questions to Consider</i>	35
Q6: This year +Guli resided at the ordination services. In an additional ordination service, +Martyn ordained three evangelical men who did not want to be ordained by a woman. Describe how this makes you feel.	36
<i>Responses</i>	37
<i>Questions to Consider</i>	41
Q7: Tell a story about people working well together across their differences	42
<i>Responses</i>	43
<i>Questions to Consider</i>	46
Q8: If you were to leave the diocese without any contact and return in 10 years, what would you <i>expect</i> to see for women in leadership in the Church?	47
What would you <i>hope</i> to see?	
Responses - Expect	49
Responses - Hope	50
Questions to Consider	52
Nick Ladd - Biography	53

# Executive Summary

The research contained in this report takes an ethnographic approach, and through the process of interviews and analytical reflection we have discovered a number of key learning points. These are at times paradoxical, appearing to be in conflict and yet still containing truth about our shared life and ministry across the Diocese. This complexity and the difficulty of discerning where to begin to address challenges and encourage celebration could lead to paralysis, and nothing changing. Instead, this report lays before us an opportunity to actively engage with both the challenges and encouragements.

Throughout the research there is a striking dissonance between an espoused theology of women's ministry being completely normal and assumed as such by younger generations, alongside an operant theology and lived experience of expectations and practice rooted in traditional understandings and assumptions regarding female roles. Furthermore, there is clear evidence of the experience of sexist attitudes and even bullying behaviour towards women. It would appear that this is not spoken of openly or directly addressed.

The third ordination service in 2019 is a substantial point of tension and pain for many. The impact of that occasion has been, and is still being, felt by people across the Diocese. The depth and range of feelings, from unease to anger, vulnerability to frustration, shame to fear, deep pain to shock, demonstrates that there is a significant need to attend to this with some urgency. The research has unveiled this experience as a wound that needs to be tended, in order to bring healing, lay it to rest and move forward. The danger of not doing so is that the tension and pain becomes embedded, seeping out into Diocesan life and ministry such that goodwill and understanding become deeply fractured.

It is notable that the research demonstrates significant anxiety and uncertainty regarding ordinations amongst those of complementarian evangelical theology, particularly in relation to both practice and relationships. This is in contrast to a more assured articulation of practice and relationship regarding ordination amongst those of traditional catholic theology. This may reflect the different journeys of these groups, in that those of traditional catholic theology have been navigating questions of belonging and practice since the ordination of women as priests 25 years ago, while for those of complementarian evangelical theology these questions have arisen more recently following the ordination of women to the episcopate.

The complementarian evangelical consideration of women in leadership as a secondary issue offers a hopeful basis from which to believe that living with difference is possible. However, it also highlights the challenge of how people of different theological



understandings find, or struggle to find, common language that enables meaningful engagement. For women, and those ordained in particular, the theological understanding of women's ministry speaks of the very heart of our identity in Christ and our response to God's calling, meaning that the language of "secondary issue" may not be heard as an open invitational intention.

Alongside these significant challenges, the research has revealed a glorious depth of women's ministry that demonstrates certain common and distinctive characteristics. The "embodied, vulnerable and pastorally courageous leadership" of women is seen through, for example, ability to develop and encourage leadership in others and missional engagement outside the church. There is a clear imperative to consider how these particular leadership gifts, skills and experience can be encouraged, learnt from and developed across the whole Diocese.

The report identifies a series of recommendations that fall into four key categories: Further Conversations; Embodying the Five Guiding Principles; Developing Women in Ministry; Diocesan Culture. The key recommendations in each category are:

1. This report is widely circulated and conversations about the experiences of women in the life of our churches are enabled across the diocese.
2. The principles and practice at ordinations for complementarian evangelicals be further clarified and greater congruence achieved with existing normal and alternative provision.
3. Concrete steps are taken creating pathways for the development of women in leadership.
4. The disconnect between espoused and operant theologies, understanding and lived practice, is addressed through the introduction of language and practices to change the culture of the diocese.

Claire Bampton  
Diocese of Leicester, October 2020

# Recommendations

---

## Further Conversations

1. This report is circulated widely through the diocese and forms the basis for a series of conversations.
2. Conversations in deaneries and parishes are enabled to draw out the concurrent experiences of women in ministry being considered to be entirely normal (espoused theology) and women's experiences of residual sexist assumptions (operant theology), and to seek better theological integration.
3. Some energy is put into enabling mutual encouragement: modelling, sharing and implementing good practices around 'living generously with difference' and the embodiment of 'the highest possible communion'.
4. The questions we asked and the questions raised by the reading of the data, are available for use in parishes as we talk about inclusion and difference.

---

## Embodying the Five Guiding Principles

5. An invitation is offered to complementation evangelicals to give a short summary of their theological position, basic principles, and accompanying practices so that this can be widely understood.
6. Ordinations: moves towards greater congruence between existing normal and alternative provisions be made.
7. Specifically, offer either a separate service where +Maidstone presides (like +Richborough) or clearly explained and transparent provision is made within the existing services for Deacons and Priests demonstrating "the highest possible communion".
8. The wound and emotion of the 2019 ordinations for all constituencies are noted, and the learning from this experience applied to make future provision more transparent and consistent.

---

## Developing Women in Ministry

9. Attention continues to be given to ensuring the distinctive qualities of women's leadership and skills are offered in all aspects and streams of training (lay, resource church, reader placement, training incumbents, contextual training, pioneer) ie 33-50% input.
10. All diocesan and deanery synods, committees, councils and working groups reflect a 50/50 gender balance.
11. Hold a 'Women Leading in Mission' learning event to showcase and share missional learning and experience.

12. Women in senior roles are supported and developed in their roles, and actively encouraged to further the ministry of women in the diocese. e.g. an occasional senior women's forum is convened.
13. A clear, intentional and measurable leadership pipeline for ordained women is developed.
14. 'Who are you developing?' conversations for flourishing in discipleship and leadership happen at all levels of diocesan life - from diocesan committees to parish toddler groups.

---

## Cultural Change

15. 50% stories in Diocesan comms are about women, particularly noting those about ministry and leadership.
16. Research, writing, events be encouraged to record women's contributions to the life of the Diocese, and shared more widely beyond the diocese.
17. Senior staff, including DBF lay staff and Area Deans, undertake some work on gender assumptions and practices among themselves and the wider diocese in respect of appointment strategy and leadership styles.
18. Steps are taken to develop a safe culture which allows for the naming 'in the moment' of experiences of gender disregard.
19. Ways be found to conscientize parishes to the unconscious cultural assumptions and practices which are placing women in particular roles.
20. Issues of gender, race, and sexuality be expressed in the language of the Diocese as one of the lenses through which the diocese reflects and ways are found to enable minority voices to be heard at all levels.
21. Within the diocesan provision addressing bullying & harassment, explore the introduction of trained Harassment Advisers (lay and clergy) to offer advice and information; to channel complaints and to negotiate or mediate between parties.
22. Develop a simple suite of language and practices to embed as the diocesan culture.

---

## Implementation

23. An action plan, detailing responsibilities, named people, and timescales, is drawn up and held by the Women's Ministry Working Group, with accountability to BLT every 6 months.
24. The work is done in cooperation with other Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work.

# Introduction to the Analytical Reflection

Rev'd Nick Ladd, May 2020

---

## Introduction

The data upon which this report is based was gathered in January 2020 by the Women's Ministry Enabling Team to support the Bishops, the Bishop's Leadership Team and themselves in their aspiration to develop women in ministry. In response to this, I was asked to prepare reflective questions arising from the interview data, with these groups of people in mind, that would attend to medium and long-term questions of development and also short-term response to the ongoing disquiet over the '3<sup>rd</sup> ordination' conducted in June 2019.

---

## Demographics

The study sought to reflect an authentic majority voice and the breadth of views held in the Diocese. The team interviewed an equal number of men and women, and a cross-section of clergy and lay from a broad representation of parish contexts, urban, suburban, and rural. The age and ethnicity of the sample corresponded to the make-up of the churches in the diocese if not the wider community. The interviews were focused on three groups. Firstly, the heavily invested: senior leadership and those who strongly identify with the particular positions ie Complementarian, Society Catholic, WATCH (30%). Secondly, those invested in questions of ministry in the diocese with no known position on questions of women in ministry (55%), and thirdly, some who do not speak for the diocese and are less heavily invested in diocesan decision making (15%). Attention was given to ensure the spiritual backgrounds of the interviewees, and their relative investment in this issue, corresponded proportionately to the representation of these perspectives in churches across the diocese.

The approach chosen for this research was ethnographic – this approach is well attested for its ability to help people to hear multiple voices and to interpret the culture of groups. Specifically, the approach here has been influenced by the practices within ‘Partnership for Missional Church’ in which the voices of interviewees are further safeguarded by agreeing with them the summary of their answer to each question before moving on to the next. The writing of this report will follow the same discipline in asking those who did the interviews to check to see if the analysis rings true to their interviewing and also if any changes need to be made to ensure appropriate anonymity. The report will be reviewed and revised in conversation with the Women’s Ministry Enabler; the aspiration is that this will be their report which they are confident to present.

---

## Analytical Approach

There are three approaches to the data in this report. First data is grouped numerically according similar content and themes. The aim of this is that you can see where the weight of opinion lies on each question. Second, some slightly longer quotes from the data are selected which give an appropriate cross-section of opinion but also helps to embody these opinions more effectively.<sup>1</sup> Third, I offer you a series of reflective questions on the data which are aimed to help you reflect together on your understanding and response. May I stress that this is not as a consultant proposing interventions, but more as a form of spiritual accompaniment to enable you to discern together the future that God is calling you into.

This is a qualitative research approach designed to give a rich account of data in a way that is appropriate to complex issues. In this, I am aware of the impact of the analyst’s perspective. I am used to handling this within my own ethnographic work and have learnt in practice the discipline of hearing voices that I may or may not agree with. In the interests of transparency, I should point out that I am thoroughly committed to the ministry and leadership of women. However, my own background and root commitment is evangelical and I understand the world from which complementarian thinking arises even if I do not embrace that myself.

---

<sup>1</sup> I did not do this for question 5 because here the stories accompany the numerical summary of the data

---

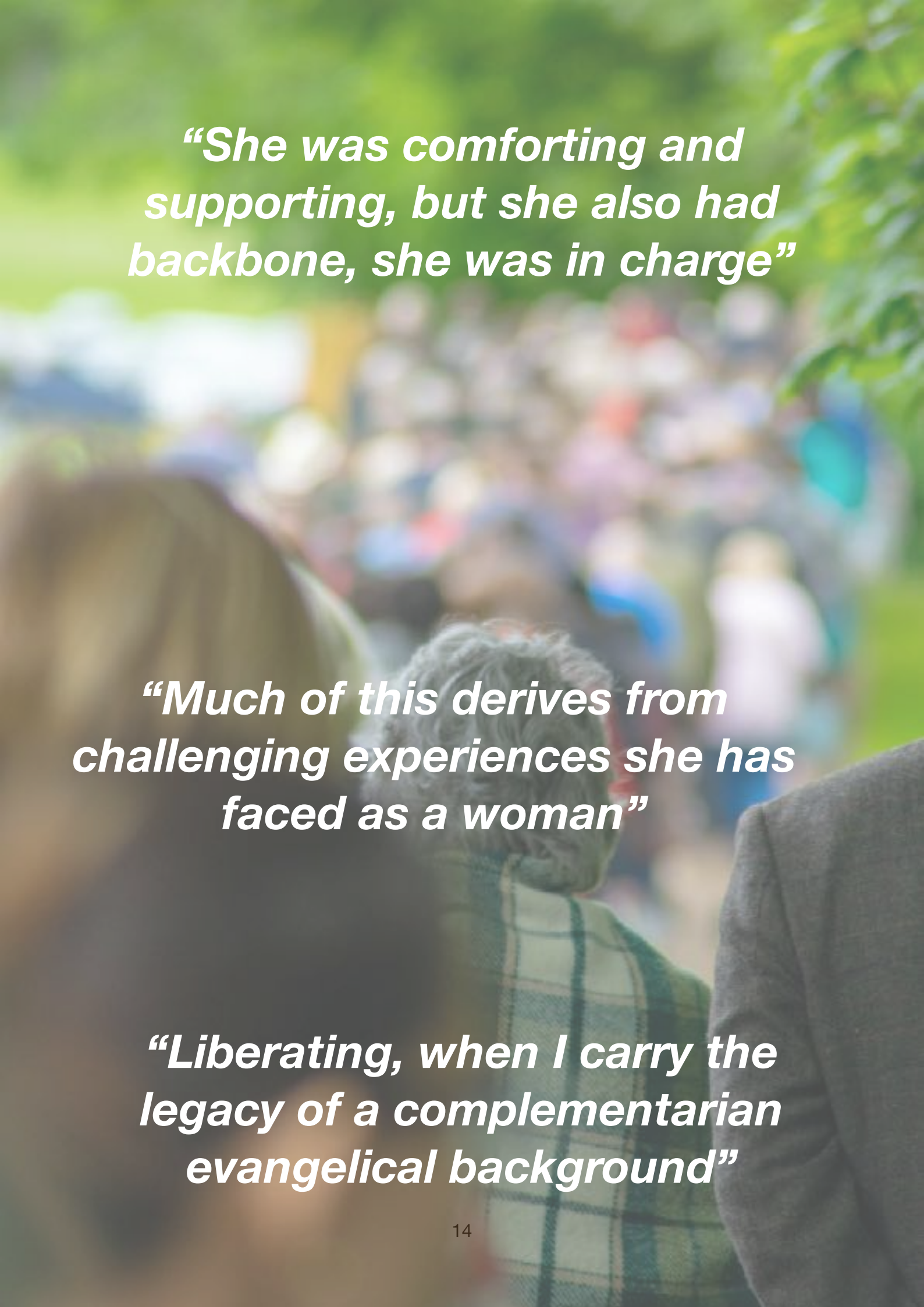
## Comment

Though I have not sought in this report to offer my own opinions, I will offer one reflection by way of introduction. It seems to me that addressing the present hiatus that has arisen from the '3rd ordination' in 2019 is both urgent and important; this should be given full attention. However, it is also important not to lose track of the wider implications for the development journey of women's ministry in the diocese and the flourishing together of women and men in discipleship and mission.

This questionnaire has been extremely well crafted to enable you to make that journey through attention to the voices of deeply committed Christians from all perspectives, both lay and ordained. By beginning with the experience and the history of women's ministry in the diocese, it sets a powerful context within which to review current practice, demonstrating how far you have come, how the landscape has changed and where things perhaps have not changed as much as some might have wished (Qs1-4). Question 5 places this even more widely in a vision of Christian flourishing. This sets a very broad context in which to attend to the more immediate challenges (Q6) and then to the kind of practices you may need through which to address it (Q7). The final question invited the interviewees to speak about their expectations and aspirations, their hopes and fears – a way of drilling down even more deeply into the challenges that you face, but remembering also the highly valued journey on which you have travelled (Q1-4).

This is practical theology from the ground up drawing on the lived experience of treasured disciples in your diocese; these are voices worth listening to. There will no doubt be the need for a deeper theological and prayerful dialogue, as some of your interviewees propose, but this data will enable this dialogue to be grounded in the real experience of actual congregations and clergy in your diocese.

**Question 1: Tell a story  
about when you  
experienced God through  
the ministry of a woman**



***“She was comforting and supporting, but she also had backbone, she was in charge”***

***“Much of this derives from challenging experiences she has faced as a woman”***

***“Liberating, when I carry the legacy of a complementarian evangelical background”***



***“The love of God  
shines through her”***

*20 interviews, 38 remarks.*

*(The number after the response indicates how  
many people mentioned it)*

- Embodying the gospel – helping me ‘see’ faith (5)
- Pastoral care in traumatic bereavement (4)
- Enabling vulnerability in shared life and ministry – strength from weakness (4) [one person mentioned +Guli in this respect]
- Enabling ministry (3)
- Being a role model (3)
- Setting vision – leadership (2)
- Good listening (2)
- Not exceptional, but normal (2)

*Each of the following were mentioned once:*

- Finding God through a woman’s ministry
- Infectious faith
- Preaching
- Prophetic
- Journeying with
- Holistic life as priest and in relationships
- Passion for justice
- Humanity
- Challenging stereotypes
- Offering ways forward, not directive
- Forming community in prayer
- Comforting and supportive
- Bad experience when I got married – not much experience, small ways rather than big

***“A life-line at a time  
when I often  
wondered where  
God was”***



## Questions to Consider

- 1.1 There is much in people's experience of the ministry of women recorded here which is extremely inspiring; how might the diocese celebrate this history and legacy?
- 1.2 One of the marks of women's ministry in these interviews appears to be embodied, vulnerable, pastorally courageous leadership. How might these qualities and skills be drawn on more in training and formation for ministry in the diocese?
- 1.3 How might the governance and structure of the diocese reflect and embrace the ministerial strengths and qualities expressed here?

**Question 2: Tell how you -  
and the congregation you  
belong to - feel about  
changes in the place of  
women in the Church over  
the last 25 years**

***“30 years ago, I was part of a church which was very gender-separated”***

***“The dynamic of the House of Bishops changed as soon as women were a part of that”***

***“Still not treated exactly as a man would be treated; women clergy more isolated”***

***“Mixed feelings in truth. Having women as bishops has shifted things - women are no longer 'alongside' in ministry, they are in roles of structural authority. Biblical arguments and discernment have been sidelined and societal trends prioritised”***

***“Women are where they never used to be”***

*20 interviews, 61 remarks.*

*(The number after the response indicates how many people mentioned it)*

- Big steps made on a long journey of change (7)
- Never an issue: grown up with it in church and community (6)
- No problem – it’s about gifts and calling (4)
- Being in a new and better place (4)
- Long way to go – lip service, not deep enough (3)
- Lack of senior roles and involvement in the structures (3)

***“I hardly notice my gender”***

***“Part of the church I have grown up with”***

*Each of the following were mentioned once:*

- I am an advocate, but find the change challenging
- My preference is a male leader
- Why is it OK for men to belittle women in public?
- Why do we license men who don’t believe in female priests/leadership?
- I am concerned that people who do not hold the majority view will never be able to be bishops and worry that those who hold a minority view will be ghettoised.

***“We’ve lost a passion for what women uniquely bring”***

***“The church I worship in now is more than happy to have women in leadership and don’t have a problem***

***“30 years ago there was an expectation of actual violence when the first woman presided in my church (Anglican, C/E)”***

***“The one I am invested in, I understand to be affirming of women, though this may be due to the association of women to pastoral work. The other congregation seems to have much more of a begrudging acceptance or tolerance of women in leadership”***

***“More accepting than 25 years ago; vocal ones have died”***

*20 interviews, 61 remarks.*

*(The number after the response indicates how many people mentioned it)*

- Normal, accepted, beneficial (9)
- Women do all things in church: priests, curates, ordinands, readers, preachers, children’s workers, Sunday school, wardens... (8)
- A journey over time from early struggles (6)

***“In the centre I notice some gendered push and pull, unconscious slips or defensiveness. I don’t think we have nailed an inclusive culture quite yet or speak warmly enough of women’s contributions to ministry and leadership”***

***“In my 15 years at this church I have only seen one example of a woman as member of senior leadership, and there are no other women, lay or ordained, who have kept their jobs over that time - a much higher rate of attrition than for men”***

*Each of the following were mentioned once:*

- +Guli is inspiring and loved
- Priest who ‘wore her femininity visibly’ (shoes, nail polish) – congregation struggled, but came to love her
- Lack of gender diversity in leadership – structural and theological blocks
- No woman has ever applied to be our vicar
- In the evangelical world, you have to become ‘men’ – no vulnerability or weakness
- Female ordination is taboo – should not have a female Bishop.



## Questions to Consider

- 2.1 What stands out in this data is the long and complex journey that the church and individuals have travelled in the last 30 years; the landscape is nowhere near the same as it was. What might it mean for more people to live positively with this present reality? How might the diocese acknowledge this publicly and seek to live more effectively and fruitfully in the present?
- 2.2 In general, there is a striking sense of normality about the ministry of women amongst church communities. Might it be that this undemonstrative reality can be lost amidst the more strident voices on both sides of the debate? How might this voice be given more attention and credibility?
- 2.3 Might there be fruitful ways for the senior staff to examine and reflect on the gender assumptions and practices amongst themselves and the wider diocese in respect of appointment strategy and leadership styles?



# **Question 3: Describe how women participate in church**

The background of the image is a photograph of a church interior, featuring several tall, narrow stained glass windows. The windows are filled with intricate, colorful designs, including depictions of figures and abstract patterns. The light filtering through the glass creates a vibrant, multi-colored glow. The architectural details of the church, such as the pointed arches and the dark stone or woodwork, are visible in the shadows.

*“Women are innovators and leaders starting many groups and ministries in church life”*

*“All the churches I've been to the vicar has always been male”*

*“Women can do everything that men can do in my church. It's really good. No restriction on women leading or being in charge of, or up front in a service”*

*“‘Tension’ is almost always about a power struggle involving a man wanting his way to be ‘the’<sub>2</sub> way”*

20 interviews, 45 remarks.

(The number after the response indicates how many people mentioned it)

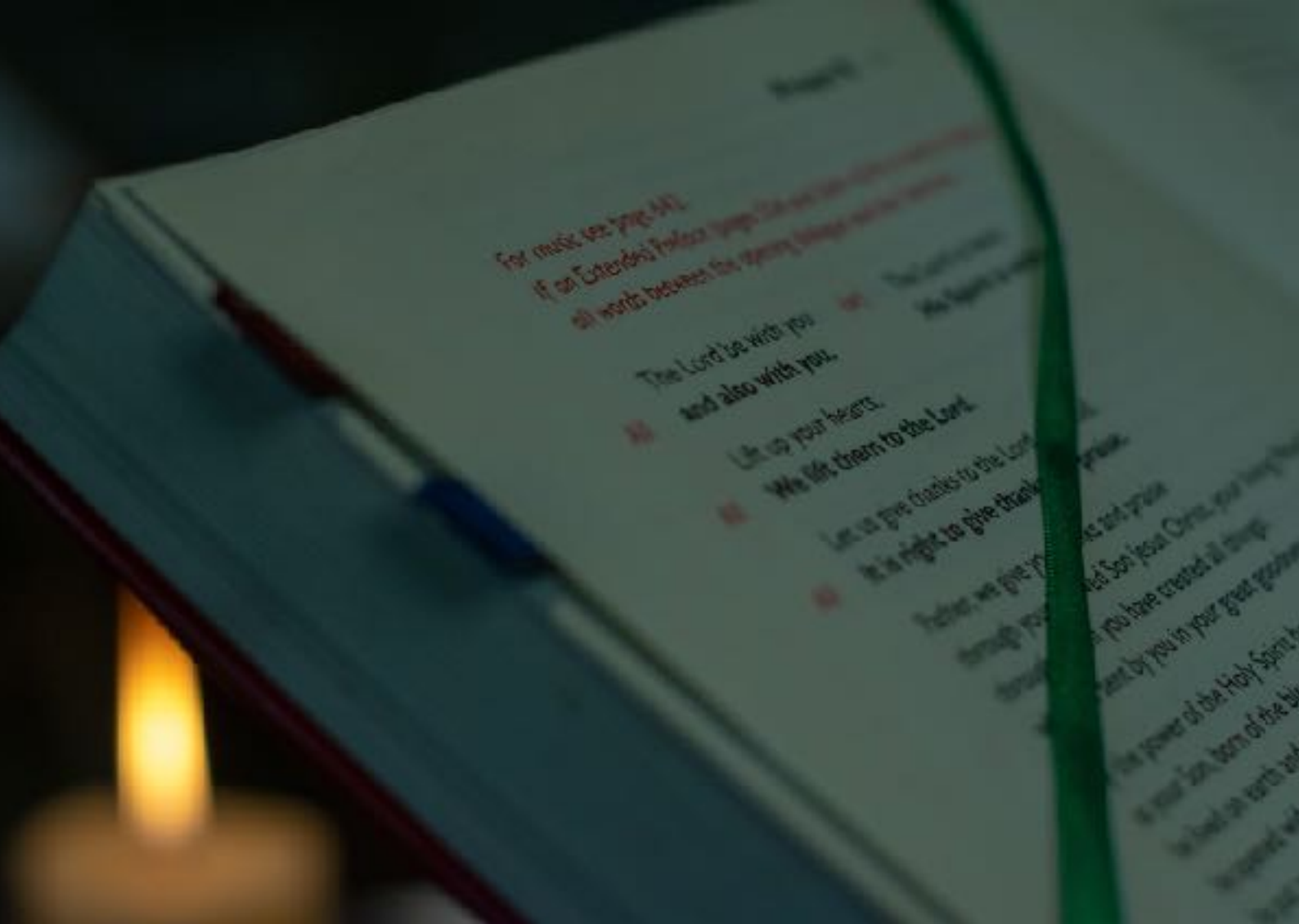
***“Both situation in local church and the bigger picture indicates there is a move towards equality of roles”***

- Women participate in a wide range of lay ministry – PCC, wardens, fund raising, Sunday school, preaching, pastoral work, welcome, quiet days – everything that men do (12)
- Women exercising priesthood (5)
- Some less up front, conducting midweek services because retired (3)
- Stereotypes in roles – men do maintenance, fabric and finance, women do kitchen, flowers and Sunday school (5)
- Women’s ministry and leadership embedded in church culture (5)
- Assumptions about male leadership (4)

***“Lay women tend to take traditional roles of <25 years ago e.g. make coffee, children’s work etc.”***

- There are specific qualities to ministry (9):
  - Pioneering and innovation especially in outreach (2)
  - Reaching some people and places more easily than men
  - Bring different dimensions to services leaders (3)
  - Connect better than men on an emotional level
  - Attention to detail, they don’t rush
- Comments on diocesan culture:
  - Recent successful campaign for maternity rights for lay women
  - Good to see a woman Archdeacon and Bishop;
  - Good role modelling in Diocese, Cathedral and Civic events
  - There is a ceiling between middle and senior leadership
  - M&M department is disproportionately male


***“Women have taken a 50:50 share of church wardenship, but in this church there is a leaning towards male leadership”***



## Questions to Consider

- 3.1 The interviewees note specific ministry qualities amongst women which have strong resonance for contemporary missional practice: pioneering, innovation, emotional maturity: how might these gifts and qualities be encouraged and drawn upon more fully in God's mission?
- 3.2 Despite significant changes in the role of women in church and diocese, there appear to be persistent conscious and unconscious cultural assumptions, amongst clergy and laity, about the place of women, which are perceived by the interviewees as detrimental to the flourishing of the church. How might the diocese help congregations and clergy to attend more fully to these cultural assumptions and practices and to their impact on Christian discipleship and mission?
- 3.3 There are clearly good models and experiences to draw upon from diocesan leadership as well as challenges to be addressed. How might you build upon the strengths in diocesan practice and address the weaknesses as you seek to promote the leadership of women in mission and ministry at all levels of the life of the diocese?

**Question 4: Where have  
you seen women given  
respect and recognition in  
the Church?**



*“Mads was a wonderful role model for pioneers and Fresh Expressions and a number of women lead here”*

*“Their work as innovators is celebrated”*

*“Seeing Archdeacon Claire - when she speaks people listen”*

*““Warmth of feeling as +Guli is enthusiastically prayed for”*

## Responses

**“Bishop Martyn shared from the front his ‘delight that one of our Resourcing Churches is now led by a woman.’ Felt significant - the cheers and response,**

*20 interviews, 60 remarks.*

*(The number after the response indicates how many people mentioned it)*

- Women in senior roles (7):
  - *Bishop;*
  - *Archdeacon Claire – people listen to her (2);*
  - *Appointment of Viv (Faull) – pioneering (2);*
  - *Mary Gregory;*
  - *Appointment of women to senior positions*
- +Guli (7):
  - *Honorary doctorate*
  - *Affirming*
  - *Head of BAME*
  - *Presiding feels normal*
  - *Respect*
  - *Warmth and enthusiastically prayed for*

- Recognition and celebration (6):
  - *Honorary canons (2)*
  - *Recognition for roles fulfilled (2)*
  - *Celebrating women as innovators*
  - *Public commissioning*

*Each of the following were mentioned once with regard to where women have been seen to be given respect and recognition:*

- Diocese
- Cathedral
- Opportunities to speak about ministry in church
- Preaching
- Female church-planting curate
- Appointment of a woman as assistant manager of coffee shop
- Reader
- Retired clergy
- Church led by women
- Special services – 25th anniversary
- Appointment processes seeking to avoid gender bias
- M&M advocating for women
- Rural churches responsive to women’s leadership
- How well they lead services
- Church wardens
- Appreciation for how women lead funerals
- Sponsoring baptism candidates
- Taking safeguarding responsibilities

---

## Responses

*Mentioned with regard to women NOT being given recognition in response to this question:*

- Not respected – including:
  - *Not supported as woman by vicar for ordination*
  - *Not asked to do things*
  - *3rd ordination and Catholic ordination (5)*
  - *Appointment of woman as vicar of Holy Trinity – Bishop Martyn’s ‘delight’ – cheering (3)*
  - *Recognition of Mothers’ Union (2)*
  - *Support of vocations – especially pathways for younger women (2)*
  - *Fresh Expressions leaders and Mads as a role model (2)*
  - *Congregations (2)*
  - *Everywhere (2)*
  - *Deanery contributions and being Area Dean (2)*
  - *Small number still anti*
  - *Female Church warden is not very visible*

***“I don't think women get the respect and recognition they deserve would be my honest answer”***





## Questions to Consider

- 4.1 In contrast to responses to questions 2 and 3, responses to this question present almost unequivocal appreciation about the respect and recognition given to women in the diocese. There is much to celebrate here. How might your experience and learning be offered to other dioceses?
- 4.2 Much is said here about the role of certain senior women in both embodying and encouraging the ministry of women. How might they be further supported and encouraged in these roles? How might you make more of the skills and abilities of these gifted women in furthering the ministry of women in the diocese?
- 4.3 The appointment of a woman as vicar of Holy Trinity reads like something of a milestone. Comments were made in a previous question about a 'ceiling between middle and senior leadership.' Is this an example of an appointment to middle-level leadership that might bridge this gap? What might be the learning for the diocese from this appointment?

**Question 5: How do people flourish in church life? Tell a story about someone (any gender) flourishing**

20 interviews, 23 remarks, 23 stories.

(The number after the response indicates how many people mentioned it)

*In recording this question, answers to 'how' were combined with stories that embody the 'how.'*

*As there are so many stories recorded here, extended quotations were not added for this question.)*

- Being accepted, valued and loved for who you are, affirmed not condemned; able to be different and truthful about who we are (5)
  - *Family coming and nurtured through accepting relationships to baptism and deeper involvement.*
  - *Couple preparing for marriage become a part and invite many church people to their wedding.*
  - *Woman who came to toddler group, unsure and lacking confidence, over time encouraged to give a small talk – becoming at ease, finding herself, growing from lack of self-worth to confidence.*
- Accompanying on a spiritual journey over time (4):
  - *Pilgrimage, Holy Week, Confirmation*
  - *Openness to the Spirit, seeing a bigger picture through prayer*
  - *Walking with Jesus through the hard times; laughter and fun*
  - *Journey from 'seeing' faith to 'seeing' God brought about a changed relationship to faith.*
- Using your skills and gifts and reaching your potential (3):
  - *Woman who leads several groups and participates in others – see her faith in everyday life*
  - *Man who was post-retirement got involved because he felt he could make a difference*
  - *Woman whose faith had faded, flourishing through being given responsibility in the care of others, in worship and in the community – honest to God about her life through prayer.*
- Participation with others (3):
  - *Drawn in through music in the All Age service; taking part in more traditional worship and making a real impact on All Age worship*
  - *Man who started coming to church after several invitations at Christmas, drawn into leading youth work and home group; Christ transformed his life*
  - *Small group of young married women started a WhatsApp support group; ran BBQ and carol services.*

---

## Responses

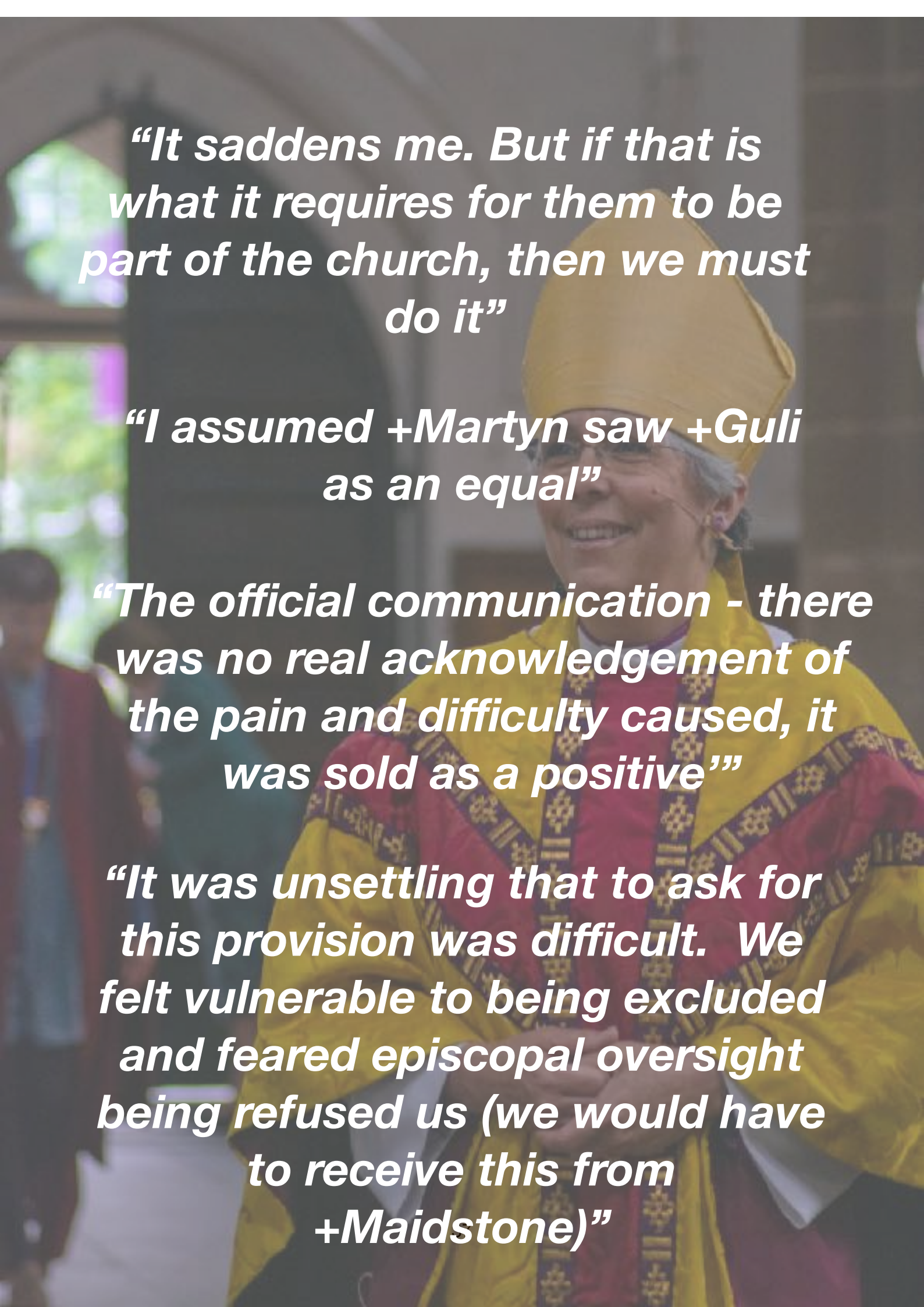
- Leaders who give opportunity to find passions, who spot things; encourage people to have a go, make mistakes, and find space to develop (3):
  - *I have grown in ways I never thought possible – investment from my department head*
  - *Children and young people were encouraged to lead worship, first doing Bible readings and then prayers and on. One is now training as a Reader, we have three under 18s on Deanery Synod and one on the Bishop's youth council*
  - *Encouraging children and young people in leading music in church, even though they are not the best. Being involved with the band has helped them improve and it's great to see them growing in confidence.*
- Forming spiritual identity through participating in a church community (3):
  - *Feeling at home in the worshipping community – relating to different people, learning to welcome, being pastoral and hospitable, giving and receiving ministry*
  - *Helping out, participating spiritually, seeing potential to develop, becoming rooted in faith – belonging and owning it, helping others to develop*
  - *Publicly sharing testimonies of pain or encouragement*
  - *Releasing forgiveness*
  - *Resilience – praying through struggles, learning through supporting refugees: doing things in the name of the church.*
- Discerning God's call (2):
  - *Ongoing relationship with church nurtured to discern and use gifts.*
  - *Reader whose faith had not really developed over 30 years flourishing in new ways as she discerned a call to pioneering; finding joy in God's calling to new things*



## Questions to consider

- 5.1 There is a mine of wonderful stories here of people of all ages being nurtured and growing as human beings in a life of faith with God. How might these stories be shared more widely?
- 5.2 One of the strong themes that arises here about the environment for flourishing is about affirmation and encouragement. What might the ministry of women bring to this priority?
- 5.3 A further theme is about how people grow through practice and how much they need permission-giving and risk-taking leadership to embrace this. Again, what might be the gift of the ministry of women to this priority?
- 5.4 A further theme is how the foundation for flourishing is relationship and participation within a community. How might you help churches and their wider communities to engage more with this way of being over against our cultural default to individualism?
- 5.5 I note that almost all of the stories here are church-centred or stories of people being drawn into the orbit of the church. How might you help your churches and ministers explore more their partnership with their communities and with the God who is already present and active there?

**Question 6: This year +Guli presided at the ordination services. In an additional ordination service, +Martyn ordained three evangelical men who did not want to be ordained by a woman. Describe how this makes you feel.**



***“It saddens me. But if that is what it requires for them to be part of the church, then we must do it”***

***“I assumed +Martyn saw +Guli as an equal”***

***“The official communication - there was no real acknowledgement of the pain and difficulty caused, it was sold as a positive”***

***“It was unsettling that to ask for this provision was difficult. We felt vulnerable to being excluded and feared episcopal oversight being refused us (we would have to receive this from +Maidstone)”***

---

## Responses

20 interviews, 96 remarks.

(The number after the response indicates how many people mentioned it)

- Emotions expressed (31):
  - *Anger (8)*
  - *Sad (3)*
  - *Disappointed*
  - *Disrespectful to half the diocese*
  - *Uneasy*
  - *Shock*
  - *Not acceptable*
  - *Awful*
  - *Really painful*
  - *Wrong and offensive*
  - *Appalled*
  - *Ashamed of church structures*
  - *Resignation*
  - *Very annoyed*
  - *Confused*
  - *Heartbroken*
  - *Frustrated*
  - *Bothered and annoyed about having to come back for a third service*
  - *Thankful for this under the 'Five Guiding Principles' – felt vulnerable and feared refusal*
  - *Deep concerns expressed about the attitudes of those being ordained and their TI's – sometimes expressed in extremely strong language*
  - *Questions raised about attitudes, honesty, power and their unwillingness to accept the church as it is today*
  - *Rewarding bad behaviour (11)*
- Concern for +Guli (8):
  - *Painful*
  - *Disrespectful*
  - *Devaluing*
  - *Sad*
  - *Unfair*
  - *She is our Bishop*
  - *Alternative episcopal oversight would have been the appropriate way to address this and remain true to the 'Five Guiding Principles', would not divide diocese (7)*
- Concern about how this has been handled by the diocese (6):
  - *Rumour mill*
  - *No acknowledgement of pain just sold as positive*
  - *Apology doesn't feel authentic*
  - *Bewildering that the diocese did not think of this situation in advance*
  - *No reference in the service to other ordinations – dishonest, amazed no-one predicted the hurt and outcry*
  - *Disappointed that incumbents were not part of the debrief after the service.*



- Concerns about living together (6):
  - *Learn to live with difference (2);*
  - *All strands of church should flourish, listening groups at Synod were helpful, this is not 'living well' together – we should have the courage of our convictions, one body – but we operate in a divisive way;*
- Bishop Martyn should not have done it himself, bad decision (4)
- Lack of understanding of ordination within ecclesiology and communion (3)
- Conflicting views about whether this was true to the five principles (3)
- Sexism, gender bias and inequality condoned (3)
- Archaic, not reflective of the world we live in, backwards step (3)
- We know what Catholics believe about ordination in terms of the historic church and unity; no parallel explanation was offered on this occasion (3)
- Regressive in terms of the ministry of women (2).

*One mention each:*

- People would be appalled if complementarian view were to be explained
- More straightforward to have both Bishops laying on hands on everyone
- Tension of living kingdom values in a broken world
- What if someone said, 'I don't want a black Bishop'
- This is to avoid conservative evangelicals leaving the church – interpretation of Scripture
- I support the Bishop's decision – but I would have done it differently
- I want a proper explanation if this is to happen again.

***“Sad that anyone putting themselves forward for the ministry should have this attitude and approach to their calling – it feels like rewarding bad behaviour”***

***“It was flat out wrong and incredibly offensive. I would rather those people weren't in my diocese, and I mean MY diocese. Incredibly disrespectful to Bishop Guli, and to half the Diocese and half the county.”***


***“Heartbroken. Angry. Frustrated. I feel it circumvented the ‘Five Guiding Principles’ and the Episcopal Oath and I am ashamed of a church structure that allowed this to happen”***



## Questions to Consider

- 6.1 What is most striking in this data is the amount of raw and unresolved emotion that is expressed. It seems to me that progress is unlikely to be made without receiving this emotion in an undefended way. How might the senior staff approach this and what help, professional or otherwise, might be available to create and support a healthy and effective response?
- 6.2 It is notable how few people comment on this as a retrograde step for women's ministry in the diocese. Perhaps this is in part related to the incredibly positive journey with the ministry of women expressed in response to the previous question. It suggests that these powerful emotions should be seen as constructive in terms of people's deep commitment to and valuing of the diocese. How might these concerns be addressed in a way that honours the past, engages with the present and looks to the future?
- 6.3 Deep concerns are expressed about the handling of the process. How might the senior staff review this? Again, what professional help might be employed to help in this process of reflection?
- 6.4 Many people are clear that there is a process for containing this difficult problem within established patterns of alternative episcopal oversight. How might the diocese prepare for this should the need recur in the future?
- 6.5 Strong feelings are expressed about the attitudes and behaviour of some of those who pressed for this service. What process might be put in place to help them reflect on their role in this and comprehend how it is perceived by others within the diocese?
- 6.6 Buried within this data is the expression of concern about how you live together with these differences in the diocese. When the emotions of this painful time have been addressed, what processes might help people explore more deeply how to live fruitfully and generously with difference?

**Question 7: Tell a story  
about people working  
well together across their  
differences**



*Two speakers at Synod who held very different views and took part in polarised debates now say they are good friends; they look out for one another; spend time together. They have not changed their views but give each other time and space.*

*I was very moved watching John McGinley walk over and hug Philip O'Reilly at Bishop's Council when + Philip North stepped down. There was real respect and acknowledgement of the hurt across theological divides.*

---

## Responses

20 interviews, 32 remarks.

(The number after the response indicates how many people mentioned it)

- People spoke about places where an atmosphere and ethos has been created where people learn to listen well, hear one another's problems and work through their differences as they work together; some noted the importance of good leadership to enable this (6)  
Examples - PCCs (2), Introducing AV In church; developing a Messy Church team; 'One Roof Leicester', 'Called Together'.
- People say they are not good at this; don't work well across difference, seem amicable, but things get put under the carpet and people won't face them; very common in church (5)
- People spoke about relationships that cross the divide where people learn to value and appreciate one another whilst not hiding their differences, particularly in the context of different views on the ministry of women. (4)
- People spoke about John McGinley and Philip O'Reilly as examples. (2)
- People accept differences as they work together in their communities for the gospel (2)
- People value and embrace each other's different spirituality and styles of worship (2)

One mention each

- Pick your battles
- Step back and try to understand where the other person is coming from – fear of the unknown may exacerbate controlling behaviour
- The leadership [a local church] have a picture of a 'proper Christian' and there is an undercurrent of towing the party line
- You learn to work together when there is no alternative
- Class at school that is very close though has had many differences because they know how to disagree
- I sponsored a woman ordinand even though I hold a different view
- We're not suspicious of what each other believes [different denominations in one parish] because we all love Jesus.

***A PCC Chair:  
because of his  
resilience and  
determination, he  
was able over time,  
to create an  
atmosphere whereby  
PCC members  
eventually worked in  
partnership.***

***It's as if we brush it under the carpet, we'll work nicely together but we won't really cover the issues that really matter.***

***Example is One Roof Leicester where a non-white, non-Christian woman runs it. First interfaith night shelter in the country. Shows how possible this (working well together) is when we get beyond the in-fighting we are so good at.***

***I don't think we are doing very well at this because we still see people grumbling about their differences. People seem to be amicable but they're not.***



## Questions to Consider

- 7.1 There are several examples here of people learning to work through and work across differences – sometimes by choice, sometimes through necessity. How might the diocese draw upon the learning here to help address current challenges?
- 7.2 It was very moving to read about the new sense of community and mission that has been created as people have faced their differences and worked through them. A number of times people testify to the importance of trustworthy leadership that has the strength to hold people in an environment of discomfort and change. How might such leadership be encouraged and developed more in the diocese?
- 7.3 Some people were very frank about the tendency to avoid and bury difference under a veneer of amity. How might people be helped to engage safely and more fully with difference and conflict?
- 7.4 Some people were mentioned who model relationship and acceptance across theological divide. How might the diocese draw upon their wisdom and experience (and that of others who have walked the same path) to help congregations and clergy engage more courageously and generously with difference?
- 7.5 One person mentioned the importance of listening to minority voices in resolving conflict and difference. Might there be some useful work to be done in listening to the feelings of the minority group in this situation?



**Question 8: If you were to leave the diocese without any contact and return in 10 years, what would you expect to see for women in leadership in the church?  
What would you hope to see?**

***Hope - more women from BAME and also younger women as leaders.***

***I hope we can find a way to work together that is not dominated by secondary issues.***

***Expect: still dominated by men, structurally and institutionally places of bias in leadership. Particularly if going to continue being complicit with licensing of those who disagree with women priests/bishops and not going to be as brave (as we should be?)***

***Expect - 'more women in leadership and more from BAME.'***

20 interviews, 73 remarks.  
(The number after the response indicates how many people mentioned it)

EXPECT

- More women in leadership (incumbents) (4)
- Compliance with those who disagree with ordination of women, diocesan investment in evangelicalism means narrower and less friendly to women (became narrower in the last two years cos they feel they have a listening ear at the highest level)(4)
- Polarisation, schism.split, enclaves, no go areas (4)
- Impossible to call (2)
- Women embedded and valued at every level of the diocese (2)
- BAME leadership (2)
- Not just 'right kind of women' - white, heterosexual, middle class (2)

One mention each

- Depends on who Bishop is and balance of senior leadership
- Dominated by men - structural bias
- 

- Numbers of men and women ministry still not equal; sensitive pastoral priests; inclusive services
- Laity care less about these issues than clergy; female diocesan
- Not many Catholics left; women want me too be the best minister I can be
- LGBT in leadership
- Women invested in - training, discipleship and evangelism
- Men and women flourishing in Christian communities
- This questionnaire not to be necessary
- No longer a conservative evangelical bent to the Diocese
- Deepening theology instead of just asking HOW to do things
- Less about numbers and more about the Body of Christ
- 'Listening to God' church, not self preservation
- Not looking for quick fixes
- Hold difference well

***I think something dramatic will have happened and I expect the church to split. The 'Bigwigs' won't budge, and they won't be dead in 10 years' time.***

## Responses

*Hope: that women will be totally embedded in every aspect of church life; that the numbers of men and women in leadership will be equal*

### HOPE

- Women's ministry embedded, equal, gifts accepted (4)
- More women in leadership - women incumbents in the City Deanery (3)
- Diverse leadership with gender balance(3)
- Appointments on merit, not gender (3)
- Less problem than it is now (3)
- No need for third ordination (2)
- More BAME in leadership (2)
- Woman diocesan (2)

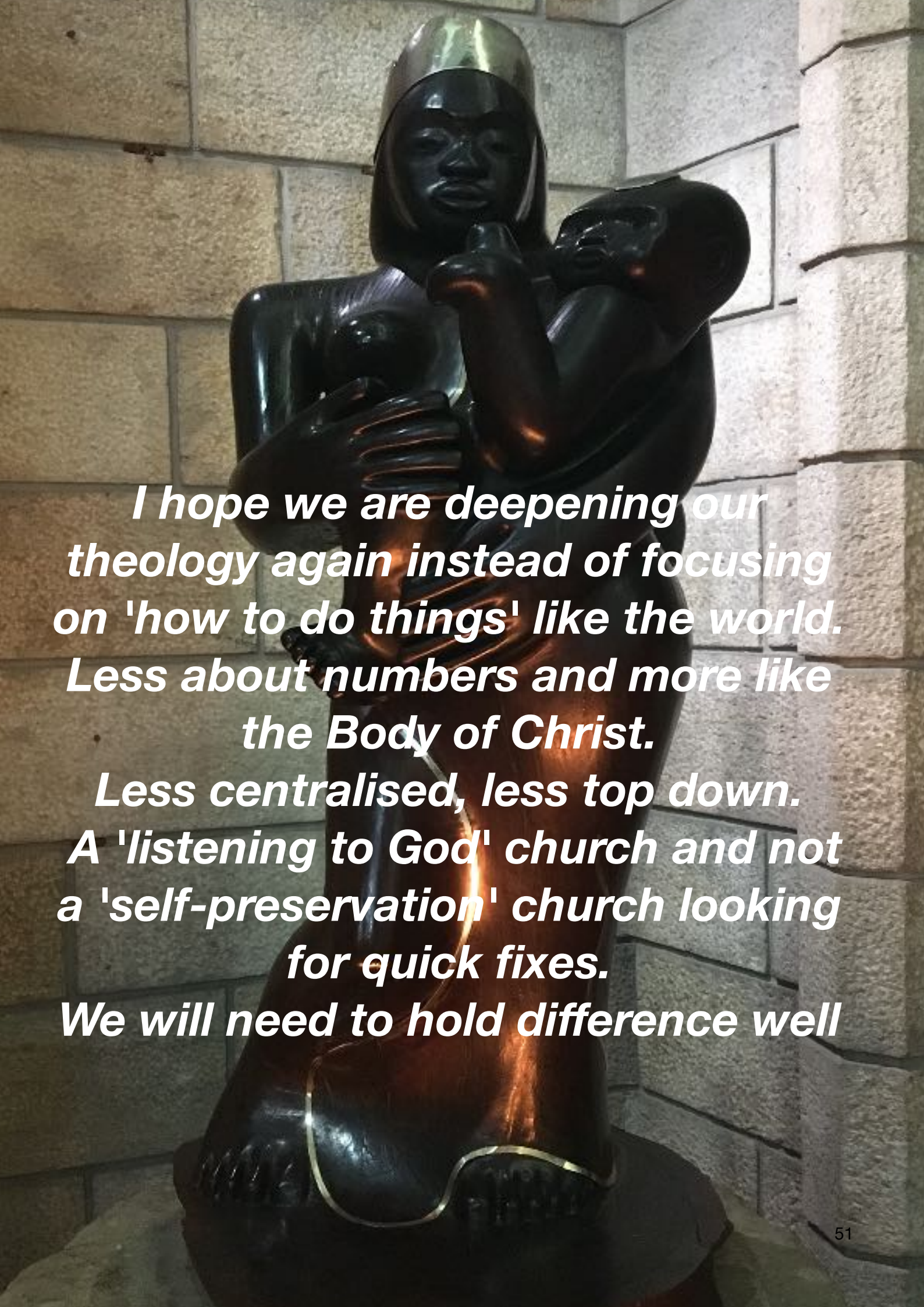
*Hope: "The ideal would be unilateral acceptance... It gets better."*

- No 'no go' areas (for women or complementation evangelicals - different people expressed these two hopes. (2)

### *One mention each*

- More younger women leaders
- Less tolerance for those who do not accept senior female leadership – lay or ordained
- Church members vote more with their feet about what kind of church they support
- Bishop be 'Father in God' to all
- Catholic and Evangelical diocesans
- 50% of biggest churches led by women; ongoing provision for all
- Way to work together not dominated by secondary issues
- For gospel-focused and community-service focused churches
- I fear that Traditional Catholics and Complementarian Evangelicals will be sidelined

*I hope to see less tolerance of churches that do not acknowledge senior (lay or ordained) female leadership*

A black, glossy sculpture of a woman holding a child, set against a stone wall. The woman is depicted from the waist up, wearing a hooded garment. She holds the child close to her chest. The sculpture is highly reflective, showing highlights from the ambient light. The background is a wall of large, light-colored stone blocks.

***I hope we are deepening our theology again instead of focusing on 'how to do things' like the world. Less about numbers and more like the Body of Christ.***

***Less centralised, less top down. A 'listening to God' church and not a 'self-preservation' church looking for quick fixes.***

***We will need to hold difference well***



## Questions to Consider

- 8.1 People hope for a more diverse and equal leadership and ministry – not just in terms of gender, but also sexuality, race and class. Though they are confident that they see some of this now, their concern for the immediate future is that it will be polarised and unjust. How might this concern be addressed both in terms of perception and reality?
- 8.2 I noted in response to the previous question the comment on attending to minority voices. However, in this question a number of people express anxiety about the level of access to and sympathy towards this minority perspective from the authority structures of the diocese. How might this uneasiness be addressed?
- 8.3 People hope for a diverse, equal and peaceful future in respect of the ministry of women and men together. However for some, this means an end to tolerance for ordaining those who do not agree with the ordination of women and for others a safe space in which to continue to espouse a traditional view. How might these opposing positions be reconciled and do the 'Five Guiding Principles' give an adequate framework for this?
- 8.4 One conservative evangelical asks that you 'find a way to work together that is not dominated by secondary issues.' However if this is perceived to be a secondary issue it raises a question about why a separate ordination was required. Might a period of discernment around primary and secondary issues help those at both extremes to review their approaches?
- 8.5 One person hopes for a 'listening to God' church that knows how to 'hold the difference.' What processes and practices of spiritual discernment might help you to listen to God together, with mature self-differentiation, at this difficult time?
- 8.6 There is a strong thread of doubt and misgiving in the expectations when compared to the positivity of the hopes. What might this suggest about things that might need to be addressed in order to foster the development of women's ministry both now and in the future?



Nick Ladd has been an Anglican minister for 37 years, during which time he has served in six parishes of very different social make-up.

For eight years he was Director of Ministry, Formation and Practical Theology at St John's College, Nottingham and has also spent time overseeing the training and support of curates for Birmingham diocese.

At present, he serves with his wife in a parish in Birmingham and works freelance, supporting churches in their missional development with CMS, teaching, researching, and offering spiritual accompaniment to clergy.

He is completing a doctorate on Christian community formation and maturity and has written a chapter for a forthcoming book on *Scripture and Mental Health* to be published by SCM.



Design - Revd Morna Simpson