Mechanisms of Exclusion. The hidden forces that shape the development and fulfilment of vocations

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1 Introduction

I began working as a hospital chaplain in 1994. Over the following 30 years, I met many chaplains who were gay, non-binary and trans. It was evident that in many cases the choice of chaplaincy was a pragmatic decision based on the negative experiences of living in a designated church house in the community. During the past three decades many attitudes have changed, both in Western societies and elsewhere. However, many denominations continue to have a poor reputation for the ways in which sexuality and gender are seen to influence and mould clerical careers.

Often clergy who find a lack of privacy living and ministering in the community, turn to chaplaincy. Bishops may support this development as it can be understood to remove a ›problem priest‹ from their direct responsibility. (In the National Health Service (NHS) chaplains are employees of the NHS). During my time as President of the College of Health Care Chaplains in the UK, I became aware through many conversations that the closet nature of clerical identity left people exposed to some pernicious influences. For example, people operating the process of transition into chaplaincy had considerable power over clergy who were in a vulnerable situation and this disparity could be exploited.

2 The Dangers of Opaque Attitudes and Practices

When I was ordained in 1991 in the Church of England, there existed a distinctly male and heteronormative culture. The vote to ordain women as priests in the Church was still over a year away, and the first ordinations did not actually take place until 1994. Divergence from expected patterns of appearance, relationships, and conduct was criticised and largely excluded from the way in which clergy careers developed. I recall one Archdeacon, who was gay and closeted, bemoaning the behaviour of a new

curate who wished to be more open about his identity. The Archdeacon could not comprehend why the curate did not understand that he could lead a happy life as a gay man so long as he kept his identity hidden from the church. This story illustrates a culture where, in some dioceses, gay clergy were ›tolerated‹ by sympathetic bishops. However, this also left clergy who did not conform to normative expectations vulnerable to a change of bishop and the appearance of far less constructive and supportive attitudes.

While many gay clergy valued pastorally supportive and caring bishops, these behaviours were not enshrined in any policy or explicit statement of support. The risk was (and to some degree, still is) that unspoken and unwritten practices, without any synodical support, could be changed in a moment. In an interesting example of this, one of the most determined, intelligent and articulate liberal bishops – David Jenkins of Durham – was succeeded by someone with a very different approach:

> »›The only substantial area on which he [i.e. the new bishop; CS] disagrees with Dr Jenkins appears to be the treatment of gay clergy. Dr Jenkins has protected men in his diocese against pressure from parishioners who disapproved of their boyfriends.‹ The future bishop of Durham, by contrast, when ›asked what his policy would be, replied that, »An admitted and open lifestyle is incompatible with full-time ministry.‹«[1]

The key words here are ›admitted‹ and ›open‹, implying that the bishop would be happy if any such behaviour and relationships were unspoken and concealed. This kind of approach was greatly in the interests of the bishop, who could come under no pressure to act against gay clergy if he was not informed that they were gay. However, there is considerable evidence that enforced concealment of sexual identity does not create happy and healthy individuals.[2] In the context of the Church, where negative attitudes about sexual orientation are given a biblical basis, the tensions between identity and ministry may be significant.

Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, and ideas about the hermeneutics of the self and the role of the Catholic Church in Ireland, Tom Ingles interrogates a sociology of sexuality. Ingles is critical of Foucault's lack of consideration for the everyday and individual experiences of how sexuality operates in people's lives. Nevertheless, Ingles finds it even more remarkable that the subject has suffered from a notable lack of research and study. This may be indicative of the many implicit forces

1 Brown, Andrew: »Durham's next Bishop eschews Controversy«, in: Independent, 3 February 1994 (here quoted in: Whyte, William: »Outrage! hypocrisy, episcopacy, and homosexuality in 1990s England«, in: Studies in Church History (2024, unpublished): https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:4d0b6197-3181-49a4-b40b-b7a0013e764b (last accessed: 10.05.2024).

2 See Pachankis, John E. et al.: »Sexual orientation concealment and mental health: A conceptual and meta-analytic review«, in: Psychological bulletin, 146.10 (2020), p. 831.

that conceal the realities of sexual politics in church and society: »A constellation of interests and an alliance of power, especially between Church and State and between mothers and priests, drove sexuality into the dark recesses of Irish society.«[3]

Christina Beardsley's extensive experience of ministry and being a trans woman is set out with helpful clarity in her chapter entitled *A Vicar's Story*. This gives a detailed account of the attitudes, legislation and theological debates in England that have evolved since the 1970s. While there are positive changes in attitudes to deployment during this time, there continues to be hostility, especially from groups identified as conservative and biblically literalist. It is important to note that Beardsley, along with others, has not always experienced incremental progression in church attitudes towards sexuality and gender. For example, Beardsley writes about the 1970s being a better time for gay clergy in the church. Senior clerics were less inclined to quiz candidates for ministry about their sexual orientation and personal life. However, like so many others, Beardsley found that while her current position was secure (as a vicar), making a move appeared to offer a limited choice of opportunities:

»*I had been in post for over a decade and was ready to move, ideally to chaplaincy, which has better boundaries between work and home. Living in a vicarage offers little privacy.*«[4]

Despite the pressures and the cost of being open about their identity in the Church, some LGBTQI+ clergy have achieved institutional progress in their vocations. At times, this has been met with open hostility and criticism. Most notably, in England, Archbishop Rowan Williams reversed the decision to appoint Jeffrey John (who was gay, celibate and partnered) as an assistant bishop. Instead, John became Dean of St Alban's Abbey.[5] The first openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church in the USA, Gene Robinson, appointed in 2003, received death threats and required the protection of security guards. I was told by someone who assisted in a service in London (UK), where Bishop Robinson was taking part, that as they waited in the entrance lobby to process into the church, a security guard changed Robinson's position as it was in line with an external window. It is hard for most people to understand the pressure and impact of such constant risk, surveillance and public exposure in the most ordinary of everyday actions.

Given that the experiences of both Jeffrey John and Gene Robinson were matters of public record, with newspapers and other media covering the stories, it is likely that other clergy in a similar situation chose not to seek or accept senior positions in the Church. The detailed publication of information about individuals' private lives,

3 Inglis, Tom: »Foucault, Bourdieu and the field of Irish sexuality«, in: Irish Journal of Sociology, 7.1 (1997), pp. 5–28, p. 5.

4 Burns, Ms Christine: »A Vicar's Story – Rev. Christina Beardsley«, in: Trans Britain. Our Journey from the Shadows, Unbound Digital 2018 (no publisher, city or pages given).

5 See Yip, Andrew K. T.: »Sexual orientation discrimination in religious communities«, in: Sexual Orientation Discrimination, London: Routledge 2007, pp. 227–242.

as well as the debate and speculation which this would generate, are a central plank of the mechanisms of exclusion. These are very effective because they are silent and, consequently, undebated. It would appear that the Church is oblivious to the gifted and talented clergy it is effectively excluding from senior positions in the leadership of the institution.

3 The Patronage Model

While one issue for LGBTQI+ clergy in the church may be survival, and the option of chaplaincy becomes a key strategy in this, there are related issues when it comes to the career paths of clergy into more senior offices. For centuries this has taken the form of patronage and the advancement of people through a form of apprenticeship.

Apprenticeship may be offered as the rational explanation for preferment of subordinates who have assisted a bishop, for example, during an early stage in their ministry. Effectively, they have been apprenticed. However, this model has been shown to limit the diversity of the clergy inducted into higher office through this system. There is a natural and understandable risk that bishops ›see themselves‹ in the character and potential of junior ministers. While this approach was once common across many professions, it is inclined to replicate the existing mix of senior clerics in perpetuity. Other modernised systems, while none are perfect, take steps to mitigate the risks of like-for-like succession. This may take the form of short-listing that favours people from minority groups, or with protected characteristics. However, given its exemption from equality legislation, the Church of England can legally operate an approach that excludes people who do not conform to its understanding of sexuality, or who were unwilling to abide by documents such as *Issues in Human Sexuality*[6].

To date I am unaware of any study of the Church of England which utilises Social Network Analysis to investigate the patterns of preferment which occur over time. However, this kind of study has taken place concerning the leadership of the Catholic Church in the USA, England and Wales.[7] The authors of the study contend that such work is essential in order to understand »the ecclesiastical cultures in which sexual abuse occurs, and/or is enabled, ignored, and covered up«[8]. The perpetuation of systems that implicitly foster concealment are shown to be both dangerous and

6 See Church of England: Issues in Human Sexuality: https://repository.globethics.net/handle/20.500.12424/228886 (last accessed: 10.05.2024).

7 See Bullivant, Stephen/Sadewo, Giovanni Radhitio Putra: »Power, Preferment, and Patronage: An Exploratory Study of Catholic Bishops and Social Networks«, in: Religions 13.9 (2022), p. 851.

8 S. Bullivant/G. R. Sadewo: Power (note 7), p. 851.

destructive. As the authors argue, part of the power of these systems is that there can be a complete absence of written evidence concerning a cover up, or any indication that separate dioceses have collaborated to act in a particular way. The culture is so well established and embedded that common patterns of behaviour may occur without any suggestion of collusion. In the Church of England, it may be argued that this explains the filtering out from parish ministry, and into chaplaincies, of clergy whose honest and open way of life is seen to be at odds with Church policy. There is no strategy document describing how this filtering would occur – it simply happens.

Such an implicit system of managed vocations, where no policy or paperwork exists to articulate or bring into view this way of operating, only becomes detectable when the output of the system is investigated. While it was not the primary purpose of our study[9] into the clergy who became chaplains, the basic demographic data we collected suddenly lifted into relief a system that had been operating for decades (or even longer). Pragmatically, it helped people who were LGBTQI+ to fulfil a vocation to ordained pastoral ministry and it enabled the Church to manage what – in many cases – were seen as ›problematic‹ priests. Of the Church of England male clergy who responded, 20 % were in a same-sex relationship.[10]

It would be accurate to describe at least some aspects of this system as a culture of ›hint and wink‹. The Book of Common Prayer[11] of 1662 remains the principal liturgy of the Church of England. In the preamble offered before the services there is a note entitled: ›Of Ceremonies, Why Some be Abolished, and Some Retained‹. This describes how many ceremonies in the life of the church were initiated with good intent but, over time, they became ›vanity and superstition‹. However, rather than address the issue of ceremonies that had become untethered from their original meanings, the Prayer Book claimed that the range of such ceremonies increased because ›they were winked at in the beginning‹.[12]

While the attitude towards liturgical and other ceremonies betrays the particular bias of the Reformation, the concept of behaviour that it winked at has enduring value as a description of organisational complicity. It conveys the sense of unspoken (and unwritten) agreements that are both knowing and silent. It is likely that this kind of shared recognition is found most frequently among people who share many aspects of the same education, ministerial formation, personal characteristics, and culture. In other words, tacit communication is most effective when it is exchanged

9 See Hancocks, Graeme/Sherbourne, John/Swift, Christopher: »›Are They Refugees?‹ Why Church of England Male Clergy Enter Healthcare Chaplaincy«, in: Practical Theology 1.2 (2008), pp. 163–179.

10 See Swift, Christopher: Hospital Chaplaincy in the Twenty-first Century: The crisis of spiritual care on the NHS, London: Routledge 2017.

11 See Bray, Samuel L./Keane, Drew N. (Ed.): The 1662 Book of Common Prayer: International Edition, Downers Grove: IVP Academic 2021.

12 See S. L. Bray/D. N. Keane: Book of Common Prayer (note 11).

between people who are part of the same club or group. For example, in the past the General Synod of the Church of England has expressed concern about the compatibility of Christianity and Freemasonry. As recently as 2018 the Church was still alert to these concerns:

The Church of England has reiterated »significant concerns« about Christians becoming Freemasons amid renewed controversy about the presence of the secretive organisation at the heart of the British establishment. Christopher Cocksworth, the bishop of Coventry, flagged up a 1987 report issued by the church that highlighted a »number of very fundamental reasons to question the compatibility of Freemasonry and Christianity.«[13]

It is unclear whether the statements of the General Synod, and some individual actions (e.g. Archbishop Rowan Williams said he would never appoint a Freemason to senior office) arose from the cultural impacts of Freemasonry on the transparency of processes, or if these concerns were part of a wider concern about the beliefs and practices of Freemasonry and its compatibility with Christianity.

It may be the public profile and degree of structure in Freemasonry that makes this the one notable example where the Church of England has directly or indirectly impeded the operation – or *suspected* operation – of covert influences in the process of making appointments. It is known that Freemasons communicate with one another through non-verbal signs, and this creates scope for hidden preferences to be shared within a group, such as an appointments panel, in such a way that some members of the panel would be oblivious to what was taking place. While this may be an egregious example of covert influence, it should be recognised that there are many less structured dynamics of association and shared background that may have a similar effect in nudging an appointment process one way or another. It may not always be a wink, but a raised eyebrow between people who know each other well, can also be freighted with meaning.

4 A Negative Process for Minority Identified Clergy

What little research has been conducted into clergy movement in the Church of England paints a bleak picture of an opaque process. In her PhD thesis, Christine Blackie investigated the experiences of clergy preparing to make a move.[14] The research was based on interviews with clergy who were exploring the possibilities of a new ministerial appointment in the Church of England. While it was not the central focus

13 Sherwood, Harriet: »C of E raises serious concerns about Christian Freemasons«, in: The Guardian newspaper, 08.02.2018.

14 See Blackie, Christine: How clergy experience preparing to move jobs in the Church of England. Doctoral dissertation, Loughborough University 2014.

of this thesis, it nevertheless became apparent that a number of characteristics, factors and identities could either impede a move or cause acute anxiety in the minds of applicants. A list of these barriers is provided in the thesis and were seen as related to:

> »Age (old and young), women (sexism, lack of role models, positive discrimination into certain posts, lack of promotion to certain posts), sexuality (gay or celibate or undisclosed), wives (working wives, involvement in decisions, positive and negative resource), ageism, retirement, family (children's schooling, grandchildren, elderly parents), prejudice and discrimination (›dead cats‹, returning from overseas), minority groups???, location (geog), houses.«[15]

In some cases, possibly resulting from political pressure exerted by the State, concrete steps have been taken to accelerate the pace of equality. Hence, when General Synod voted to admit women to the episcopacy (2014), it was followed by legislation to allow newly ordained bishops who were women to jump the queue for admission into the House of Lords (the legislative ›upper house‹ of the UK). For historic reasons, 26 bishops of the Church of England have seats in the House of Lords and admission is normally based on the length of episcopal service of a bishop. When a bishop retires, the next longest-serving bishop enters the Lords. On that basis there would have been a considerable wait following the consecration of the first female diocesan bishop, before that bishop could have entered the upper house. The Lords Spiritual (Women) Act of Parliament (2015) enabled an adjustment to be made for the process to allow ›early entry‹ (or, looked at alternatively, slightly less delayed admission after 500 years!) to the House of Lords.

Nevertheless, after a decade since the consecration of women as bishops became lawful, progress has been slow. It was noted that in 2023, following eleven recent appointments of diocesan bishops, only two of these were women. At present there are no openly gay diocesan bishops in the Church of England. While the online application process for appointments in the Church of England (›Pathways‹) includes a section for monitoring the diversity of applicants, there is considerable uncertainty about how this data will influence practice. For example, in the continuing debates of General Synod about the work entitled ›Living in Love and Faith‹ (LLF)[16], the bishops have issued a statement in 2023 (GS 2328) describing further work to be done, including the production of »some guidelines on access to resources, appointments, senior appointments etc.«[17] on many observers, a great deal of energy is being expended, but remarkably little progress is being made.

15 C. Blackie: How clergy experience preparing (note 14), p. 332.

16 See General Synod: Living in Love and Faith, 2023 (https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/gs-2328-llf-nov-2023.pdf; last accessed: 10.05.2024).

17 General Synod: Love and Faith (note 16), Annex F, p. 5.

Understandably, LLF has been subject to extensive theological debate. While the theologian Professor Adrian Thistleton commends the serious effort which has been put into producing a document that is even-handed, he is nevertheless critical of the use of Scripture in the debate:

> »There is almost no evidence, anywhere, of biblical criticism, or of the positive contribution it can make to understanding LLF's topics. Genesis 1–3 is read as if it really all happened. … The ›all scripture‹ of 2 Timothy 3:16, dubiously translated, is still supposed to apply to the whole Bible even though the Bible did not exist then.«[18]

This indicates a primary difficulty in how the church at large, and especially church leadership, engages with the Bible. For people already convinced of the divine approval of a particular form of marriage, Scripture is deployed as a selective means of justifying the pre-existent conviction. As I shall argue below in relation to the church, this kind of belief in the inerrancy of something we have predetermined to be faultless is a profound vulnerability which fails to take adequate account of the partiality of human insight. This partiality exists for several reasons, but the founding myth of the Bible makes clear that the human capacity to apprehend things with accuracy is severely compromised by sin. Perhaps if everyone approached the claim that ›the Bible says‹ with a humility which recognises our own limitations, this would be the beginning of wisdom.

5 Systems of Appointment and Deployment

In the 2023 Standing Orders of the General Synod of the Church of England, the process for the operation of the Crown Nominations Commission (CNC) is defined.[19] Given the place of the Church of England as the church established by law, the CNC only makes a recommendation to the sovereign for the appointment of a diocesan bishop. The final decision rests with the King on the recommendation of the Prime Minister. However, in reality, there is little evidence of the CNC's preferred candidates being rejected.

There is no reference in the CNC Standing Orders to conflicts of interest. Given the relatively small size of the pool of candidates for senior appointments, and the

18 The Church of England: Living in Love and Faith, 2020: https://cofe-equal-marriage.org.uk/living-in-love-and-faith/ (last accessed: 10.05.2024).

19 See The General Synod of the church of England: Standing Orders, 2023 (https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/standing-order-updated-nov-23_1.pdf; last accessed: 10.05.2024).

fact that senior figures serve on the CNC, it seems remarkable that no explicit consideration is given to the potential links between members and the clergy being considered for high office. Consequently, there is no discussion about how any bias or conflict may be identified and mitigated.

One aspect of historic and prevailing arrangements is an inadequate interrogation of personal prejudice and bias. This is surprising given that the church through the ages has taught the doctrine that human perceptions can be misled. However, this has often been directed at individuals and (what are perceived to be) wayward or heretical communities. There has been limited analysis of the ways in which error might shape the institutional practices of the church or its exercise of power. While the consequences of failing structures have been identified, theological considerations have been thin on the ground. Studying the experience of the Catholic Church and abuse cases in Australia, Cristina Lledo Gomez writes:

> »Over and again, the failures of church leadership point to governance issues which include the abuse of power, lack of transparency, lack of accountability, institutional self-interest over the dignity of individuals, incompetence and mismanagement of leaders, authoritarian and/or non-collaborative leadership, misogyny and discrimination against women in leadership and decision-making positions, to name but a few.«[20]

Part of the dynamic which sustains patterns of abusive behaviour by clergy and senior church leaders, is a foundational commitment which is unable to attribute any failure to the church itself. If the church is viewed as holy and infallible, it follows that those holding such a conviction will find it very hard to believe that the structures of the church can nurture sinful behaviours. As Gomez says: »I have argued elsewhere that it is difficult for leaders to take up this ownership of sin of the Church if they cannot imagine the Church itself as ever being unholy.«[21]

When the police in the UK interviewed an Anglican bishop about abuse allegations considerable behind-the-scenes support was given to the bishop under investigation. The archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, asked the commissioner of the Metropolitan Police to speak to his opposite number in the area where the bishop was being interviewed. Senior figures of the establishment wrote in the bishop's defence, including the then Prince of Wales, now King Charles. There is ample evidence that the archbishop simply could not believe that another bishop would commit the acts described in the allegations. As the Independent Inquiry into Child Sex Abuse

20 Gomez, Cristina Lledo: »The ›Conducive Situation‹ in the Context of Abuse and the Catholic Church: Exploring Integral Theories of Sexual Violence and Ecclesiologies Supporting Clerical Abuse«, in: Buddhist-Christian Studies 41 (2021), pp. 127–147 (https://doi.org/10.1353/bcs.2021.0014; last accessed: 10.05.2024).

21 C. L. Gomez: Conducive Situation (note 20), p. 140.

found in its case study[22] of this scenario, time and again the reputation of the church was protected at the cost of any priority for the feelings and needs of survivors.

The culture identified in the various explorations of clerical abuse point to a wilful ignorance about the scope for sin within structures that are opaque and have limited accountability – especially to independent scrutiny. Power has been used to silence critics and perpetuate the space for hidden and dangerous behaviours. It would be foolhardy to believe that the culture excavated during the forensic investigation of sexual abuse does not have wider significance for the ways in which critical voices, or approaches other than those which are heteronormative, are treated in the life of the churches.

Prophetic voices have observed and named these tendencies in the Church for many years, but have been little heeded. This is wholly understandable if the purpose of the institution has become the preservation of itself at all costs. The liberation theological Leonardo Boff wrote accurately about this risk:

> The Church »imposes itself on the community it is meant to serve. Truth is substituted by internal certainty and factions are created by cutting short those movements that will not be constrained by the institution. Every institution runs these risks and has the tendency to become autocratic, that is, to become a system of power and repression over creativity and criticism. Institutions mean power.«[23]

This description of the Church as an institution accords with the experiences of many people who identify as LGBTQI+. Until recently the Church has been able to suppress the debate about this experience but, increasingly, it cannot sustain the exclusion of meaningful debate and truth about the human experiences that inform those discussion. Only through a more honest and open process can deployment become something that is fair and fully inclusive.

6 Experiences in Chaplaincy

A large part of the attraction of chaplaincy for clergy who find that both the church hierarchy and/or local parishioners, convey negative attitudes towards their sexuality, is the commitment to equality and inclusion found in many public bodies in

22 See IICSA: »Peter Ball's Return to Ministry«, in: The Anglican Church. Case Studies, 2019: https://www.iicsa.org.uk/reports-recommendations/publications/investigation/anglican-chichester-peter-ball/case-study-2-response-allegations-against-peter-ball/c10-peter-balls-return-ministry.html (last accessed: 10.05.2024).

23 Boff, Leonardo: Church: Charism and Power. Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church, Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers 2012.

the UK. For example, in 2001, four parish clerics of the Church of England resigned due to the intolerable nature of their situations. In the resignation letter from one of these clergy, he wrote to his bishop saying that he felt ›a second class human being‹[24]. However, it has not all been plain sailing in chaplaincies. A notable case arose in 2001 when a senior chaplain complained to the Archbishop about a newly appointed chaplaincy colleague who was openly gay. This led to a protracted and stressful impasse and, eventually, both chaplains left the NHS Trust which employed them.[25]

Canon Jeremy Pemberton was the first serving Church of England cleric to marry his same-sex partner, Laurence Cunningham, in April 2014.[26] Following his marriage, a bishop refused to grant an authorisation called ›Permission to Officiate‹ (PTO). As Canon Pemberton was in the process of moving to a new hospital chaplaincy appointment, this refusal undermined his application. The ensuing litigation became an important test case about whether the Church of England could act in a way that might prevent an appointment being made by a different entity (the NHS). Ultimately, after lengthy hearings and appeals, Canon Pemberton lost his case and was unable to take up the post which he had been offered following standard NHS processes.

7 Conclusion

The material reviewed in this chapter suggests a number of possibilities for understanding the impacts of identity on the deployment of clergy in the Church of England. These can be summarised as follows:

It has been shown that endemic cultural practices have the capacity to generate uniform behaviours of exclusion despite (in some cases) the absence of any explicit policy or mechanism of central control designed to make this happen. This impedes transparency and accountability.

Theologically, it would appear that churches rely considerably on the judgements of individual leaders, who often have limited accountability. The level of confidence and deference towards senior leaders demonstrates a failure to understand the nature of power and the risk of unfair appointment processes.

24 See Combe, Victoria: »Homosexuals quit church over celibacy«, in: The Daily Telegraph, 17.08.2001.

25 See »Chaplain resigns after ›harassing‹ homosexual cleric«, in: The Daily Telegraph, 05.04.2001.

26 See Cranmer, Frank: »Chaplaincy and the Law«, in: Christopher Swift/Mark Cobb/Andrew Todd (Ed.), A Handbook of Chaplaincy Studies, London: Routledge 2016, pp. 79–96.

Although diminished to some degree by the changing culture of wider society, and greater questioning within structures of church governance, the heritage of a ›hint and wink‹ culture may still be alive in practices of deployment.

Robust monitoring of the outputs of recruitment is necessary in order to identify hidden patterns of exclusion which may operate out-with efforts to ensure wider representation of minority groups in posts at all levels in the church. Such data must be shared and interpreted in order to guide a culture of conscious inclusion.

As the material cited in this chapter illustrates, while the Church of England may be taken as a case study, similar practices and behaviours exist in other churches. It is suggested from this examination that all parties need to be aware of the limitations of individual insight and should be committed to a process of theological exploration which is not pre-determined by existing attitudes and vested interests. Until this happens, the Church will be impeded in making its mission in the world effective.