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**Ordinary Theology amongst Church of England Volunteers: A
Contribution to the Debate. Timothy Peter Edge**

Abstract

This thesis explores the theological literacy of ordinary (not theologically trained) Christian Church of England volunteers who carry out volunteer work beyond their church congregations. I approach Jeff Astley's "ordinary theology" in a way that enables the ordinary Christian volunteer to express their theological literacy.

The cohort studied was of Christians whose vocation was to be an intentional Christian presence to those they supported in the context of prison or offender work and supporting chaplaincy with the deaf. I chose to approach this thesis in terms of Jeff Astley's ordinary theology. This was in order to attend to how such Christian faith (or theology) had changed as a result of their work. I used Cameron's "Theology in four voices", attending to the volunteers "espoused" voice, pursuing their perception of "operant" theologies. I approached the study empirically, using a conversational hermeneutic as a researcher who was an "observer as participant": a participant in the above fields not directly involved, yet sharing a horizon of understanding with the cohort. I pursued semi-structured questions which brought the underlying theology to the fore. Such theology included understanding of culture, the Bible, and aspects of faith such as Christian love, forgiveness and prayer.

The conclusions derived from analysing the data in discussion with "ordinary theology" may encourage further academic exploration and expansion of this particular genre of practical theology, and in particular regarding those motivated by faith to work beyond the local church community. These findings could also provide a theological resource to the wider church, in its mission to engage with the world beyond local church congregations.

**Ordinary Theology amongst Church of
England Volunteers: A Contribution to the
Debate**

Timothy Peter Edge

A thesis for the degree of Doctor of Theology and
Ministry

Department of Theology and Religion
Durham University

2020

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List of Abbreviations

A;B;C;D;E;F;G;J;K;L;M;N Alison; Barbara; Christopher; Deborah; Elizabeth; Fiona; George; Jennifer; Ken; Linda; Mark; Nigel.
Pseudonyms for each participant.

AA	Alcoholics Anonymous
BERA	Council of the British Educational Research Association
CofE	Church of England
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
CREC	King's College Research Ethics Committee
DCD	Diocesan Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
FG	Focus Group
HM	Her Majesty's
HMP	Her Majesty's Prison
KCL	King's College London
MFS	Ministry Focussed Study (part of King's College DThM)
NA	Narcotics Anonymous
PF	Prayer Fellowship
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

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1. INTRODUCTION

I was greatly impressed and encouraged by the commitment, enthusiasm and faith of the Christian Volunteers in the large prison where I was Co-ordinating Chaplain.¹ The desire of the volunteers to serve others whilst responding as Christians was admirable. I had also witnessed those same traits in the work of Christian volunteers involved in community projects such as Family Centres in parish ministry.² In 20 years of full time ministry in the Church of England, I have seen such Christian volunteers flourish in their faith and Christian commitment, both to their home church and to the community projects they served. Throughout over six years of prison ministry, I was able to recruit volunteers into the hundreds. Nevertheless, there remained churches unwilling to permit their congregation members to participate in this voluntary work, even for the “once every six weeks” cycle I imposed on Sunday morning attendance.³ My impression was that leaders of such churches were concerned that once any member of their congregation was released into volunteering beyond their church, they might lose their faith. In my experience such volunteering was an encouragement to faith, in addition to providing service and mission to the community beyond the church. These impressions and experiences were the spur to my research into the place of faith in Christian volunteers who volunteer beyond the community of their own congregations. As I embarked upon this thesis, I became the part-time executive chair of the Diocesan Council for the

¹ A “Category B and C” prison which held over 1000 male prisoners, co-ordinating chaplain then was the lead chaplain managing the full chaplaincy team.

² Family Centres, now called “Children’s Centres” were usually based in a staffed building and responded to local need, funded by Local Government grants and charitable incomes.

³ This was to enable volunteers to remain full participating members of their own churches, though some volunteers were more regular, as their Sunday attendance was at the evening service of a large church.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing, a body which also used Christian volunteers to support the chaplaincy team through one-to-one pastoral support of the deaf. These volunteers were also committed and keen to share how their faith impacted on their voluntary work. I now had a second cohort of volunteers with whom I both had access to and had an understanding of their work environment and culture. In my experience, these volunteers readily discussed faith issues that arose from their work. They would share with fellow volunteers or a chaplain or their clients if asked. The local and institutional church has a great deal to learn about applied faith from these volunteers, and might even help them with theology (or “faith”). The local church may be unaware of the advantages which such volunteers bring to the congregation through their enthusiasm and desire for a richer theology. I will be addressing these issues in the conclusion.

This Doctoral thesis began in King’s College London, where the culmination of a taught element was to carry out a “Ministry Focussed Study” (MFS) using empirical methods. With the title: “Is a Christian’s Faith Enhanced through Volunteering in a Community Setting?” It was after the MFS was completed that I made a move to Durham University, as King’s college closed its DThMin course. I decided to build upon the empirical work, which became the basis for this thesis. The focus was changed in order to consider what the theology of the volunteers was, and how Astley’s ordinary theology could be used. The questions were modified to reflect the common areas of active faith which had been found to be forms of a common operant theology, in terms of Cameron’s

“Theology in four voices”,⁴ resulting in a similarly produced but different set of questions for the remainder of the study. The original cohort was also re-interviewed (with one exception) in order to explore their espoused theology in a common way.

The second aspect of the title of this study is ordinary theology. Jeff Astley laid out a “concept” to “take seriously the beliefs of ‘non-theologically educated’ churchgoers and other Christian believers” in his book titled *Ordinary Theology*.⁵ This appears to offer the ideal context in which to place the espoused theological aspect of the work of this thesis as discussed in the methodology chapter.⁶ For me, Astley’s ordinary theology shone as a beacon of sensitive and respectful attention to the ways of the ordinary believer. He outlines the value of hearing such “ordinary theologians [that] have something to say on their own account.”⁷ Astley notes that the “ordinary Christian” holds a theology that must be considered to be the “first word” in theology, rather than being academia’s “second word.” In that case, Astley proffers, as the first word, the initial theology of the ordinary Christian is to be taken seriously, something he suggests that neither the academy nor church leaders had done to date.⁸ Astley’s proposition is that faith is learned by practice, and conveyed by a

⁴ From Helen Cameron and D Bhatti et al., *Talking about God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology* (Chippenham Wiltshire: SCM Press, 2010). Discussed further 54-56 and 98-99.

⁵ Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology: Looking, Listening and Learning in Theology* (Great Britain: Ashgate, 2002), viii.

⁶ 83ff.

⁷ Jeff Astley, “Ordinary Theology as Lay Theology: Listening to and learning from Lay Perspectives, *INTAMS Review: journal for the study of marriage and spirituality*, 20 (2). 182-189 (2014), conclusion.

https://humanities.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/collegeofhumanities/theology/centreforbiblicalstudies/Astley_2014_preprint_INTAMS_2018290.pdf Accessed 11:04am 6th December 2017.

⁸ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 163.

“conversational dance with others”.⁹ Knowledge, therefore, is put into the context of knowing by “acquaintance” rather than “about”, so one needs to look at a more visceral understanding of faith and theology which accounted for action and responses.¹⁰ My methodology employs this approach: one of practical theology, utilising qualitative semi-structured interviews. Studies directly relating to Astley’s “ordinary theology” are current and relatively new. In the main these studies have not shown the ordinary Christian as able to express the theology taught by their local church, and so an exploration of the theology of the ordinary Christian halted at that point. I hope to show that there is a cohort of ordinary Christians who have engaged with theology by putting into practice their faith and theological understanding in order to support Christian initiatives beyond their local church community. I therefore hope to extend the findings related to Astley’s thesis to date through my research of the cohort of committed and enthusiastic volunteers that I had met.

1.1 Study outline

The first need is to establish what research has been undertaken in the area of volunteering in past decades that might be applicable to contemporary practice in the Church of England. By far the most prolific writer on the study of the ordinary Christian, including volunteers, is Robert Wuthnow. His studies pre-dated ordinary theology with his books primarily covering the United States of America (USA) at the end of the last century and into this.¹¹ In England, studies directly resulting from Astley’s ordinary theology were undertaken by Andrew

⁹ Ibid., 115.

¹⁰ Ibid., 6 and 27.

¹¹ See Chapter 2, 19ff and Bibliography.

Village and Ann Christie. Their findings appear to indicate that ordinary Christians have a limited or unorthodox Christian theology. To ask questions of committed and enthusiastic volunteers could provide a cohort who, by engaging with intentionally Christian practise of their faith, may have a more considered view of the theology they use or encounter. This led to my pursuance of the following questions:

1) Within the Church of England do 'ordinary' lay Christians who practice intentional Christian work engage theologically within such a practice?

2) How do the implications of such theological engagement by 'ordinary' Christians, active in their service, contribute to current debate on ordinary theology?

I therefore developed a methodology which asks volunteers about their faith in relation to their practice beyond the church congregation. I do this as a priest in the Church of England, and so pursue a cohort where such a tradition is understood. I further pursue cohorts of volunteers who are active in areas of ministry with which I have a working knowledge (offender work and the deaf community) within one large Anglican Diocese within the Province of Canterbury in England. I will pursue their underlying theology using qualitative, ethnographic, sociological enquiry methods in order to attend to analysing the narrative of each participant in relation to their practice. Validation of the information gleaned will be achieved where common theological themes arise from independent discourses. Divergent themes will also be noted. As the participants are primarily not tutored in academic

theology, the lens of Astley's "ordinary theology" was considered particularly apposite. The combination of attentive listening and ordinary theological insights should reveal any theological component to the language of the Christian volunteer.

I have drawn on various sources for this methodological approach. Firstly, Jeff Astley's ordinary theology, as already discussed. Within this approach, I use Cameron's "Theology in four voices" using the "espoused theology" of the volunteer cohorts.¹² This, I accessed by way of an empirical method based on Swinton and Mowat's hermeneutic of self-reflection, using snippets of narrative used by the volunteers in semi-structured questions, in a conversational style.¹³ My approach as researcher was as "observer as participant", the participant aspect being someone who had been involved in the same areas as the participants, but as observer as I was not directly involved in their work.¹⁴

Such narratives were gathered in the data for later analysis using insights from Catherine Kohler Riessman's narrative analysis techniques to coding, based upon the espoused theology identified, with coding and transcription to paper for analysis, as described in the methodology.¹⁵ In *Chapter 4* I present the findings with salient comments from the volunteers. Here, their theological perspectives are shown. This is done extensively in order to show the theological literacy and depth and coherence of common themes of Bible

¹² For further discussion see 98-99.

¹³ 88-90.

¹⁴ 81-83.

¹⁵ 100-103.

reading, vocation, prayer, love, forgiveness, grace and also their thoughts on more normative theology.

The analysis explored such theology in light of existing literature and research where such theological literacy from the ordinary Christian volunteering beyond the church congregation is hard to find. Sometimes in this study, an apparently simple sentence may lead to very complex theology, such as that of forgiveness or love, these were pursued in the analysis of *Chapter 5*. There is always a risk that I imposed my personal theology. However, my personal engagement with and understanding of the specific fields of offender work and the needs of the deaf community was used not to defend any theological position, but to produce conversations which were more a form of what Amy Shuman would call “a process of negotiating, rather than defending, meaning.”¹⁶ The participants would be quick to point out any misunderstanding I had when I reflected back what I had understood them to say. It is in these responses that the rich theological content will be found and recorded. The responses to questions about local church involvement and support will also be noted and compared for common experiences. Using the methods outlined above, the theological response of the volunteers in this study will be compared with the results of studies in practical theology in relation to volunteers. In particular making comparison of these results with those of ordinary theology researchers, Christie (sometimes with Astley) Village and those included by Astley in *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, with how the cohort I studied responded to my approach.

¹⁶ Amy Shuman, *Other People's Stories: Entitlement Claims and the Critique of Empathy* (Great Britain: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 5.

1.2 Study findings

I found that the ordinary Christian who engaged with volunteering beyond the local church congregation responded with a high level of theological literacy. However, there were common frustrations regardless of local church size or tradition. These were that the local church leaders appeared not to appreciate the value of their church members who were ordinary Christian volunteers, allegedly giving little regard to their experiences, and not responding to the theological (or faith) questions that resulted from such engagement. This leads to implications for both the academy and the church.

For the academy, Astley's ordinary theology may be shown to be a useful tool to explore the teaching of ordinary Christians. This becomes more important where Christians active in the world beyond their local church congregations try to apply their faith. Such faith is challenged in ways independent of the assumptions and expectations of their local church community. This presents a valuable opportunity to learn and test what one has absorbed of the Christian faith.

For the local church, Christians who are engaged in work beyond the local church congregation are involved in mission. Astley's ordinary theology offers a way to explore the questions and explanations of theology which may result from such missional engagement. The results of such enquiries may then be used to enable the local church to both support their volunteers in mission, and to engage with theology in a way that has currency in the world beyond the church congregation. Such engagement via the volunteers may enable the

preaching and teaching of the local church to address issues that are important to such work, in a way that helps the whole local church community to look beyond itself and engage in mission. The concluding chapter will offer more details on both the academic and the missional possibilities raised in this study through using Astley's ordinary theology.

1.3 Limits and terms used

In seeking to place the work of Christian volunteers in the Church of England, research across the English speaking Western world had been sought, as these sources were most likely to influence the Church of England (CofE). I must also accept that my own limited knowledge of other languages also contributed to this choice, though where translations to English have existed, these have been considered equally influential. Literature from Journals dating back to 2000 have been sought, as earlier literature on volunteering is very limited and in any case may respond to past cultural concerns. I have however considered some books written in the 1990's, as they may contain more developed ideas of volunteering that provide a basis for more recent studies.

There is mention of "Prison fellowship" (PF) and the "Sycamore Tree Course" throughout this dissertation. PF is an umbrella organisation available to Christian groups across England and Wales to offer support in "praying for our prisons, supporting chaplains and running PF programmes."¹⁷ Its major programme is the "Sycamore Tree Course". It is referred to by the "Ministry of

¹⁷ See <http://www.prisonfellowship.org.uk/> accessed 2nd August 2016, and for the quotation, the final two lines from page: <http://www.prisonfellowship.org.uk/who-we-are/our-story-so-far/> accessed 2nd August 2016.

Justice” which runs the prison service as “Prison Fellowship - Sycamore Tree programme”, it is run in prisons throughout England and Wales.¹⁸ This is described as follows:

Sycamore Tree is a victim awareness programme that teaches the principles of restorative justice. It is taught in prisons in groups of up to 20 learners by PF volunteers. Prisoners on the programme explore the effects of crime on victims, offenders, and the community, and discuss what it would mean to take responsibility for their personal actions... For most offenders on Sycamore Tree the most powerful element of the programme is when a victim of crime comes in to talk through how crime has impacted their lives. Offenders have an opportunity in the final session to express their remorse – some write letters [link to typical prisoners letters offered], poems or create works of art or craft. Members of the community are invited to support and bear witness to these symbolic acts of restitution. Sycamore Tree is currently running in 40 prisons across England and Wales.¹⁹

Other organisations that may be mentioned are less commonly quoted and will be explained in the text in situ.

¹⁸ As indicated by the government web site: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/249235/prison-fellowship-sept-2013.pdf, accessed 2nd August 2016.

¹⁹ From the Prison Fellowship (PF) web site <http://www.prisonfellowship.org.uk/what-we-do/sycamore-tree/> accessed 3rd November 2016.

2. VOLUNTEERING: THEMES RELATING TO THE CHRISTIAN

The Church of England (CofE) volunteers considered in this study operate in a social welfare environment beyond that of their local church. I do not expect the individual volunteers to have any explicit knowledge of such settings, however, there may be vestigial aspects of past memory or family story prompting conscious or subconscious responses, so knowledge of these wider settings may inform later analysis. Some of their observations and ideas may be affected by a further variety of cultural and personal ideas from their local community, school or family, in addition to myriad interactions of national and international influences upon their religious convictions and their socio-political standpoints in this increasingly globalised world. Sometimes comments from studies in different environments or nations may be relevant at this individual level, and this will be especially so where studies are in the English language, and therefore more likely to be read by British ministers and theologians. I will therefore review current thinking on how countries in the Western world (of Europe, USA, Canada and the Antipodes) have approached social welfare issues. Having done this, I will review forms of Jeff Astley's "ordinary theology", thus producing the research questions which will drive the methodology.

2.1 The History of faith and welfare

For much of the Christian era – from the fourth century to the late 20th century, Christianity was the dominant faith of those in power in Western Europe and those who went on to rule and govern in the USA, Canada and Australia.

Church history books will tell us that the Bible was the written word of St Paul and others, usually contemporaries of the life of Jesus on earth, reflecting the development of the early Christian church.²⁰ It was Constantine, ruling the Roman Empire 311-337, who turned Christianity from a sect to state collaborating faith.²¹ Indeed, as the centuries went by, the power of the Western Roman Catholic Church was such that it brokered the power of kings and city states throughout Europe. The monastic movement in particular cared for the poor so that welfare of the poor became a particular work of the church, whilst Bishops and senior clergy contributed to state power.²²

Luke Bretherton finds early Doctors of the Roman Catholic Church, St Ambrose and St Augustine, as fundamental to the constructive, if not challenging relationship of the church to a separate secular authority by virtue of a distinctive Christian pattern of practical morality (or compassion).²³ The monastic movement of the middle ages exemplified this.²⁴ Rana Jawad outlines the way “Churches often acted as conduits for gifts and endowments aimed at the poor”.²⁵ Eventually such good works became institutionalised in the provision of alms-houses, hospitals and schools, some of which remain to this

²⁰ See for example W.H.C. Friend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Great Britain: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984).

²¹ *Ibid.*, 504-505.

²² The Mission and world influence of this period is well documented in Stephen B Bevans and Roger P Schroder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (USA: Orbis Books, 2004).

²³ Luke Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics: The Conditions and Possibilities of Faithful Witness* (Singapore: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 193-197.

²⁴ Rana Jawad, *Religion and faith-based welfare: From Wellbeing to ways of being* (Great Britain: The Policy Press, 2012), 36-38.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

day, but in different forms (St Bartholomew's and St Thomas' hospitals in London, and Winchester and Eton schools).²⁶

Henry VIII dissolved and/or took over these institutions, and the monasteries and churches of the land, bringing the critique of Lutheranism and Calvinism, which spread through Europe.²⁷ In terms of social influence, the state and the church were then effectively as one.²⁸ During the Victorian era, poverty being rife in cities, factory towns and rural areas, the church, together with Christian thinkers, championed charitable giving to relieve poverty.²⁹ This was regardless of compassion, as it was believed that to deny charitable giving would be to remove individual responsibility for one another.³⁰ Nevertheless, charity was unable to keep up with the depths of poverty, with both the poor and sometimes those voluntarily helping them, dying as the need was so great.³¹ Clearly philanthropy could not keep pace with need, despite the many charities and the churches promotion of them. As the Victorian era came to a close, the power of the church began to wane. Jawad suggests that this was the result of Christian social action being adopted politically, with the result that laws such as the 1870 Education Act ended voluntary subscription to what were charity funded schools, therefore reducing the influence of the church which had championed such philanthropy.³²

²⁶ Ibid., 37.

²⁷ Ibid., 36-39.

²⁸ Ibid., 38-39.

²⁹ Frank Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain: The Disinherited Spirit* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2008 paperback edition), 6-10 and 13-25.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 16-17.

³² Jawad, *Religion and faith-based welfare*, 43-44.

In Britain, since the Second World War, such relationships between church and voluntary agencies has varied in the progression noted above from a Beveridge style social provision for all, paid by taxation, to a more liberal system of the state providing only basic social care, with the exception of the NHS.³³ Within the UK, Bäckström, Jawad and Prochaska each identify the growth of the “Welfare State”, a term attributed to the Archbishop William Temple, though put into place by the politician Beveridge.³⁴ The state then became responsible for many buildings in England, primarily hospitals, halls and schools, staffing them with paid professionals.³⁵ Such professionals replaced the largely female volunteer supporters who had vacated welfare in favour of the war efforts.³⁶ Prochaska summarises this change, noting the optimism of the immediate post-war period of the 1950’s and 1960’s where neighbours and extended families, in addition to some voluntary workers, supported and perhaps signposted those in need to the Government funded social services.³⁷ Grace Davie suggests that demographic changes in Britain, and indeed Europe, took place due to birth control becoming more effective, so reducing family size and thus reducing the need of each family, enabling women to become increasingly productive in the economy, rather than only caring for their children.³⁸

Prochaska holds the oil crisis of the 1970’s responsible for both straining the resources for social care, and making the Conservative government of Margaret

³³ Ibid 45-53.

³⁴ Bäckström, *Welfare and Religion*, 4 where Beveridge only is credited with a visionary sense of welfare for all; Jawad, *Religion*, 44-53 and Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service*, 93-96.

³⁵ Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service*, a point built up throughout this book, but the shift from church charity to the state in the post war period is highlighted, 90-96.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service*, 160-161.

³⁸ Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945* (India: Blackwell Publishing, 1994), 21-24.

Thatcher pursue a “New Right”, seeking minimal state funding for social welfare and a desire for a Victorian style voluntary support of the poor.³⁹ By the 1980’s the Government supported most voluntary agencies.⁴⁰ This was due to insufficient voluntary giving to support the needs of social welfare, not least, Prochaska suggests, because the centralising of the social care policy undermined local giving.⁴¹ This should have been no surprise, as, noted earlier, voluntary giving in the Victorian era was also insufficient to cope with the problems of poverty. The “New Labour” politics of Blair and Brown led to an increased recognition of the funding of voluntary welfare organisations (the voluntary part being largely now the governance of these), and so set the scene for the 1990’s and 2000’s.⁴² The 2010’s began with the Cameron government in coalition with the Liberal Democrats, where Cameron spoke of the “Big Society” in order to engage voluntary action, but still pursued a centralising of policy.⁴³ The “Localism Act”, resulted in local government supporting voluntary agencies from the grants and policies of the national government.⁴⁴ Spending could then be regulated by national government, and voluntary agencies needed to adapt to cuts in services, which has arguably reduced the welfare care of the poor to date.⁴⁵

Meanwhile, towards the end of the twentieth century, the engagement of Christian churches in the UK has reduced, though this has undergone a slight

³⁹ Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service*, 162.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 163, also attested by Ann Morisy, *Journeying Out, A New Approach to Christian Mission* (UK: Continuum, 2004), 4.

⁴² Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service*, 163-165.

⁴³ Jawad, *Religion*, 60 and 122-123.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

renaissance in terms of being recognised by the government as an appropriate partner.⁴⁶ This is partly due to the political changes of the 20th Century and the growth and collapse of secularist theory in the latter half of that century.⁴⁷ Christian church membership fell, first with individuals retaining a Christian identity; commonly as non-attending the “Church of England”, then even that identity fell.⁴⁸ As Christian identity shrank, the impact of other religions grew, both on the Global stage, and in the UK, through the growth of immigration from non-Christian countries.⁴⁹ Each faith community and religion played its part in supporting the welfare of its members, including political mobilisation.⁵⁰ The requirements of religious tolerance, and requests by these religions for recognition, led to the realisation by the state that all religions, and perhaps even humanism and atheism (and their guiding ethics), had a constructive impact upon the community, in addition to dangers where resentments came to the fore.⁵¹ Religion could not simply be ignored or commodified, it had a contribution in its own right.⁵²

The demise of any attempt at a secularist agenda came to be due to the influence of these newly revealed religions.⁵³ Of course the injunction to gain a closer union with God by one’s practice of compassion or charity is in all the major religions, though this may only have been recognised as relevant within the UK

⁴⁶ Robin Gill, *Churchgoing and Christian Ethics* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 59-62 and 93.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service*,

⁴⁹ Jawad, *Religion*, 93-99.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 209-221, also Richard Farnell, Robert Furbey, Stephen Shams Al-Haqq Hills, Marie Macey and Greg Smith, *‘Faith’ in urban regeneration?: Engaging faith communities in urban regeneration* (Great Britain: The Policy Press, 2003), 17-18.

⁵¹ Jawad, *Religion*, 224-226.

⁵² Farnell, *‘Faith’ in Urban Regeneration*, 1-3 and 21-29.

⁵³ Ibid., 27-29 and 40-45.

during the 21st century.⁵⁴ Jawad notes that such a way or path is common in the texts of Islam (the straight path); Judaism (Massur and Halecha); Hinduism and Buddhism in the Dhama; Zoroastrianism in the Sadreh and Kasti; and Christianity in the Gospels (for example John chapter 14 verse 6, with Jesus as the way to salvation).⁵⁵ Such compassion is a challenge to secular authority, and not comprehended by its bureaucracy. Indeed Dinham suggests that such a humanising force, “faith-based social action... in relational communities”, is needed in order to moderate the ruthless bureaucracy of the capitalist system in the West.⁵⁶ However, one needs to be aware of how difficult it is for individuals or religious groups to stand apart from the local political system, as both are embedded in the same culture.

As the “secularist agenda” was falling, the “anthropology of Christianity” was being developed. The “anthropology of Christianity” has, according to Joel Robbins, become a study where Christianity was given a “self-conscious quality” born of the “changing position of religion” when the accepted secularisation of society became less convincing in the late twentieth century.⁵⁷ Robbins, who pursues the anthropology of Christianity from 2003, where he laments the lack of “a viable anthropology of Christianity”,⁵⁸ summarises the reason for this being that

⁵⁴ Farnell, *Faith' in Urban Regeneration*, 1-3.

⁵⁵ Jawad, *Religion*, 15-17.

⁵⁶ Andrew Dinham, *Faith and Social Capital After the Debt Crisis* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), xiv. This is also the thesis of Esping-Andersen, *Three Worlds of Welfare* noted later in this chapter.

⁵⁷ Joel Robbins, “The Anthropology of Christianity: Unity, Diversity, New Directions,” *Current Anthropology* Volume 55, Supplement 10, December (2014), S157-S171, S160.

⁵⁸ Joel Robbins, “What is a Christian? Notes toward an anthropology of Christianity,” *Religion* 33:3 (2003) 191-199, 191.

Christians, almost wherever they are, appear at once too similar to anthropologists to be worthy of study and too meaningfully different to be easily made sense of by the use of standard anthropological tools.⁵⁹

After that paper, an anthropology of Christianity began to be published and Robbins is credited as “one of the founders of the anthropology of Christianity”.⁶⁰ Eloise Meneses and David Bronkema argue both for a need to accept the supernatural experiences of others as possible, and to maintain a critical reflective distance in order to “make theorizing possible.”⁶¹ Indeed, Robbins suggests that anthropologists share with Christians (and theologians) a vocation to be “a resident alien, in the world but not of it”.⁶² Much of the current literature and study are primarily concerned with Christianity and culture. Robbins makes the claim that Christians have a distinct culture by the way they organise the cultural mixtures around themselves.⁶³ This is identified through statements of what Christians “believe in”, rather than “about”, for, “Christian belief is about trusting God and acting accordingly”.⁶⁴ However, to date, no studies involving the anthropology of Christianity that specifically investigate the Christian who volunteers beyond their own congregation have been found.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 192.

⁶⁰ Eloise Meneses and David Bronkema, editors, *On Knowing Humanity: Insights from Theology for Anthropology* (Great Britain: Routledge, 2017), 2.

⁶¹ Ibid., 5.

⁶² Joel Robbins. “Anthropology in the mirror of theology: Epistemology, ontology, ethics (an afterword)” in *On Knowing Humanity*, editors Meneses and Bronkema, 222-240 above.

⁶³ Joel Robbins, “Continuity Thinking and the Problem of Christian Culture: Belief, Time, and the Anthropology of Christianity,” *Current Anthropology* Volume 48, Number 1, (February 2007) 5-38, 16.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 15.

2.2 Welfare in Europe and the Western Nations.

Once one strays beyond the UK to other Western European and allied nations such as the USA and the Antipodes, then a different set of political and religious history and expectations may temper the current and recent experience of individuals. Some experiences may be transferable to the UK context, others are more esoteric. For example, Bäckström points out that “in the US there is no state in the sense that this is understood in Europe; it simply does not exist”, so even the language of the “welfare state” is not possible.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, welfare in the United States relies heavily upon the contribution of Christian congregations, in a similar way that it does in Europe and the UK.⁶⁶

2.2.1 *Methods of welfare state typologies in Europe and the West*

When it comes to considering other research that is from outside the UK, but written in English, I have considered those that appear to be relevant to the interests of volunteers and welfare issues, but it is helpful to note here the different settings in terms of social, political and cultural approaches. A number of writers have referred to Gøsta Esping-Andersen’s *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*.⁶⁷ This is not the only model of welfare state typology available; indeed C. Bamba lists a further eleven.⁶⁸ However, I have found it

⁶⁵ Anders Bäckström and Grace Davie, *Welfare and Religion in 21st Century Europe: Volume 1 Configuring the Connections* (Great Britain: Ashgate, 2010), 192.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁶⁷ Gøsta Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Great Britain: Polity Press, 1990).

⁶⁸ Clare Bamba, “Going beyond The three worlds of welfare capitalism: regime theory and public health research” *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* (2007), 61(12), 1098-1102, 1099, <https://jech.bmj.com/content/jech/61/12/1098.full.pdf> accessed 16:00 14th August 2019.

to be the most quoted, and indeed Bambra concludes that the Esping-Andersen typology remains “an acceptable starting point in terms of examining within and between welfare state differences”.⁶⁹ Esping-Andersen considers how democratic governments implement welfare support in order to humanise the capitalist system which would otherwise cause “class divisions and social inequalities”, leading to the collapse of social order.⁷⁰ The book views the approach to welfare as depending on how natural cultures and governments had developed from farming and so were radically altered with the impact of industrialisation, where a renewed capitalist class structure came into play which varied within each nation’s industrial/fiscal approach mix.⁷¹ This includes what he calls “a system of stratification”, including the formation of unions, and the power of the upper and middle classes.⁷² Esping-Anderson also considers each nation’s approach to “de-commodification”, that is the extent that welfare permits social care and wellbeing to be uncoupled from the requirement to earn.⁷³ Esping-Anderson’s work to identify three distinct models of social welfare not only provides comprehension to this thesis, but has since been used by others to usefully comprehend the social, political and cultural implications of Western nations’ approach to welfare and community work. These methods are helpfully summarised by Bäckström and Davie, and I list their summaries here.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Ibid., 1101.

⁷⁰ Esping-Andersen, *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, 11.

⁷¹ Esping-Andersen, *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*.

⁷² Ibid., 23-26

⁷³ Ibid., 21-23.

⁷⁴ Bäckström and Davie, *Welfare and Religion: Volume 1*, 4-5.

The Liberal Model This model is typical of Anglo-Saxon countries, such as England, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. Here responsibility is taken by the state for basic social issues such as health, education and social care, although independent agencies are also given considerable scope.

The Conservative Model This is found mainly in continental Europe – for example, in Germany, France, Austria and Belgium. In this model, the state has responsibility for a social welfare framework, while voluntary bodies of various kinds (including large numbers of paid professionals) play a defining role. A sub-division of this model is sometimes included.

Termed the *Weak Conservative or Rudimentary Model*, it is found in countries in Southern and Eastern Europe, which are also linked to the conservative model, but where the family is more important than the state in the delivery of welfare. This model predominates in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Croatia and Romania.

The Social Democratic Model This is typical of Nordic countries – Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Iceland and, to some extent, the Netherlands. It gives the state overall responsibility for general social welfare, while voluntary organisations provide only complementary services.⁷⁵

It is worth noting that Esping-Anderson considers Britain to have emerged from the Second World War under the social democratic model as a result of the reforms to the welfare system by Beveridge, but has since become more suited to the liberal model with increasing power from the middle and upper classes to

⁷⁵ Ibid.

claim such de-commodifying privileges in full, leaving the lower classes with their benefits offering less income.⁷⁶

Broadly however, faith-based organisations are accepted to provide some form of welfare support throughout these Western countries. Subtleties of the route of funding from state or voluntary contributions may vary as noted above, but in terms of recognition of the value, a need for some sort of support apart from the direct application of state aid is accepted, and volunteers have a common role to play in further contributing through faith-based organisations.

Christian denominations and traditions will also have their effects.

VanHeuvelen suggests that Catholic social teaching arose out of preaching “lessons of compassion and collective responsibility” contrasted with “certain strands of Protestantism, teaching messages of individualism and market outcomes as reflective of moral worth.”⁷⁷ Of course the Catholic teaching on subsidiarity, that one does not do for others what they may do for themselves, is allied to the conservative model of social welfare. Comparing nations with a dominant faith with those with religious diversity, VanHeuvelen showed that religious diversity reduced the number of Christians voluntarily working in social concerns beyond their own congregations.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, in terms of volunteering beyond the congregation, “minority religious members are more supportive than majority religious members”.⁷⁹ VanHeuvelen maintains that

⁷⁶ Esping-Andersen, *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, in particular 22-33.

⁷⁷ Tom VanHeuvelen, “The Religious Context of Welfare Attitudes.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* Vol. 53 (2) (2014): 268-295, 271.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 288-292.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 290.

Catholics are more likely to volunteer (supporting “market intervention”) than Protestants, but explains that the picture is more complex due to the interplay of religious diversity and the degree of secularisation (in terms of depth of national religious heritage).⁸⁰ Stijn Ruiter and Nan Dirk De Graaf researched 53 countries to conclude that “Protestants have a higher expected probability (.31) to volunteer than Catholics”.⁸¹ What the studies do not consider, is the extent to which volunteering in the civic arena is carried out by Christians apart from the church and maybe this explains why some Christians are perceived to volunteer more than others. A 2006 study of 29 nations by Pui-Yan Lam considered Roman Catholic traits compared with Protestant or non-religious cultures, across countries, to establish the likelihood of membership of voluntary associations beyond the church.⁸² She concludes that Protestants were more likely to volunteer for social action, though admitted that it could be because such Protestants were usually the dominant social group, so “ingrained in a society’s civic culture”.⁸³ Ruiter and De Graaf, found that countries with a higher incidence of church membership are “almost four times... more likely to volunteer than people living in the most secular country” (meaning “countries that score low on average church attendance”).⁸⁴ Apparently, even “people who never visit church” are more likely to volunteer in a devout country.⁸⁵ A

⁸⁰ Ibid., 290-291.

⁸¹ Stijn Ruiter and Nan Dirk De Graaf, “National context, religiosity and volunteering results from 53 countries,” *American Sociological Review* Vol. 71 (2) (2006): 191-210, 200.

⁸² Pui-Yan Lam, “Religion and Civic Culture: A cross-National Study of Voluntary Association Membership,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* Vol. 45 (2) (2006): 177-193.

⁸³ Ibid., 189.

⁸⁴ Ruiter and De Graaf, “National context, religiosity and volunteering,” 202, definition, 198.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 202-203.

similar point is also noted by Webber, Lam, VanHeuvelen and Grace Davie.⁸⁶

Again, Ruiter and De Graaf consider church membership and church attendance, but no other aspect of commitment to faith.

Nations are not simply a product of financial modelling, economic decisions or religious identities, as Esping-Anderson recognises throughout his book.⁸⁷

Bäckström, de Roest and Yeung note the desire for people to regard their family as influencing their response to welfare volunteering, with a pride in family clouding the contribution of religious values.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, in the West today, churches co-operate with each nation's welfare system in one way or another, encouraging such social cohesion to work by humanising state care with the provision of human care from family and religious organisations. However, women's issues are raised, especially in relation to the conservative approach. Adam Dinham and Vivien Lowndes point out that it is often the women of the community, whether in the relatively poorly paid Faith Based Organisations of any description, or in the support of family members.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Respectively: Webber, "Exploring volunteering," 77-80; Lam, "Religion and Civic Culture", 179-180; discussed in pages above and Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain: A persistent Paradox* (Singapore: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 54-56.

⁸⁷ Esping-Andersen, *Three Worlds of Welfare*.

⁸⁸ Bäckström, *Welfare and Religion*, 116, Hendrik Pieter de Roest and Herman Noordegraaf, "'We learned it at our mothers' knees" Perspectives of churchgoing volunteers on their voluntary service," *Reformed World* 59 no.3 (2009):213-226, 222-226 and Anne Birgitta Yeung, editor, "Churches in Europe as Agents of Welfare- Sweden, Norway and Finland: Working Paper 2 from the Project Welfare and Religion in a European Perspective, Volume 1", (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2006), <https://uu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:46829/FULLTEXT01.pdf> 2-3, accessed 10:45 on 12th June 2019.

⁸⁹ Adam Dinham, and Vivien Lowndes, "'Faith and the public realm," in *Faith in the Public Realm: Controversies, policies and practices*, ed. Adam Dinham, Robert Furbey and Vivien Lowndes (Great Britain: The Policy Press, 2009), 1-19, 9-10.

2.2.2 Welfare and social capital

I have avoided the use of the term “social capital”, or its derivatives: “bridging”, “bonding”, “linking” or even “religious” capital, despite its use by social campaigners and academics alike. The problem with this term is in the name, “capital”. Welfare has already been discussed in this chapter as something necessarily involving humanising agents other than the state, whether it be a liberal, conservative or social democratic model.⁹⁰ Adam Dinham would go further and considers that the capitalist system which underpins the West’s view of economy is in need of humanising by offsetting the bureaucratic and market driven financial drivers which relentlessly push for profit with no regard for other forms of human flourishing, so those pursuing welfare issues might well avoid using the word “capital”.⁹¹ In an earlier article, Luke Bretherton critiques the use of “social capital”, “because of its implied instrumentalization [sic] of personal relations”.⁹² By using “social capital” and their allied terms, Bretherton succinctly states that they lend “plausibility to attempts to quantify and engineer patterns of human society”.⁹³ Robert Putnam, who is generally recognised as raising the profile of “social capital” and its allied terms, credits Michael Woolcock as “a good friend and co-conspirator in the nascent social capitalist movement”.⁹⁴ Woolcock printed an article where he extends social capital to include the same terms used by Putnam: bonding capital of “relations

⁹⁰ 27-32.

⁹¹ Adam Dinham, *Faith and Social Capital After the Debt Crisis* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), the thesis of the book, summarised in xiii-xiv.

⁹² Luke Bretherton, “A New Establishment? Theological Politics and the Emerging Shape of Church-State Relations,” *Political Theology* 7.3 (2006) 371-392, 375.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (USA, Simon & Schuster Paperbacks: 2000), 510.

among family members, close friends and neighbours”; bridging capital - “implying connections between people who share broadly similar demographic characteristics”; and linking capital, which has a “vertical dimension” of alliances which enable some form of communication and comprehension between those who are powerless and those who have power.⁹⁵ It is telling that Woolcock works for the World Bank.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, as Dinham also observes, “social capital” may enable communication with systems run by those wedded to capitalist ideas, and Dinham contributes to a book *Faith as social capital*, which uses these terms for that purpose.⁹⁷ Indeed Dinham is almost at a loss as to what term may replace “social capital”, suggesting perhaps “faith contribution” as an alternative, but implies that this does not quite capture it.⁹⁸ Bretherton however suggests a number of terms to replace “social capital”: “solidarity”, “trust” and “civic association” as each have currency as “more theologically consonant terms”.⁹⁹

2.3 The engagement of volunteers to social welfare

When one considers the development of social care as first church, then church with state, then a welfare state with church contributions, the expectation of the average person in the UK may vary widely. Within the memory of an extended family in the UK will be a broad range of experience or expectation of the state providing all care, to the churches and/or volunteers providing most care, as the political and religious provisions have changed rapidly throughout the twentieth

⁹⁵ Michael Woolcock, “The Place of Social Capital in Understanding Social and Economic Outcomes,” *Canadian Journal of Policy Research* 2:1 (2001), 11-17, see 13.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁹⁷ Robert Furbey, Adam Dinham et al, *Faith as social capital: Connecting or dividing?* (Great Britain: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2006).

⁹⁸ Dinham, *Faith and Social Capital*, 182.

⁹⁹ Bretherton, “A New Establishment”, 375.

century and into this century. Some may have expectations dating back to when philanthropy drove welfare care at the end of the Victorian era, whilst some may have expectations that rejoiced in Beveridge's provision of the welfare state, and some of more recent approaches to provision or ideas from abroad. Such memories or expectations will be tempered by the political, religious and psychological propensity of each individual.

2.3.1 Volunteering and welfare

It will be apparent from the above political and historical considerations that welfare volunteering will not automatically be perceived as an uncontested good in all situations. My personal experience, both in offender work and in the support of the Deaf community in this decade in the UK, was that volunteers have a lot to offer to augment the statutory care that exists. From my viewpoint as a chaplain wishing to extend human care for these communities, volunteers provided a motivated and committed cohort, compliant to the limits that governed them. Generally, their commitment grew, though, as in any workforce, there were rare occasions when individuals had to be removed due to their inappropriate actions. I will now review what motivates the volunteer from literature on the personal development of volunteers, the volunteers' contributions to social wellbeing and the volunteers' sense of vocation, before considering a model of volunteer motivation proposed by Yeung, and subsequent implications, both good and bad.

2.3.2 *Volunteering and self-development*

Judy Esmond and Patrick Dunlop's study of the motivation of volunteering in Australia did not take into account churchgoing.¹⁰⁰ They concentrate on psychological drives and found "values (i.e. acting on deeply held beliefs about the importance of helping others)" a high indicator of motivation to volunteer, with "reciprocity" (being aware that we all were needy in one way or another, so one should find opportunities to contribute to the community) and "recognition" (the need to be recognised and appreciated for their work) being the next two most important indicators.¹⁰¹ Further motivations recognised are "understanding" (being the opportunity for self-development) and self-esteem.¹⁰² Esmond and Dunlop note that belonging to an organisation that has a similar value system to your own enhances commitment to support "values", "reciprocity" and "recognition".¹⁰³ Perhaps then, once a church has active volunteers, more will be likely to join in. Esmond and Dunlop additionally strove to discover why people do not volunteer, with the prime response being that "many people indicated that they would volunteer if they knew that the volunteer opportunity was meaningful, or made a difference to people's lives."¹⁰⁴

Peter Kaldor, Leslie Francis and Philip Hughes, in a survey of 1033 randomly selected Australians, identify that secular volunteers are largely of the

¹⁰⁰ Judy Esmond and Patrick Dunlop, "Developing the Volunteer Motivation Inventory to Assess the Underlying Motivational Drives of Volunteers in Western Australia" (Research Project, MTD-MAKING THE DIFFERENCE, 2004).

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 14 and 49-50.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, Appendix 1, 60.

“extrovert” personality (“characterised by social interaction and an interest in people”).¹⁰⁵ However, volunteers from a church congregation include both introvert and extrovert personalities, indicating that there was another “driver” to volunteering where religion was involved.¹⁰⁶ Though they accept that churchgoing spurred community involvement, personal faith is not part of the research, only personality traits. They concluded that low psychoticism produces more community involvement amongst church groups than secular groups.¹⁰⁷ It would appear that faith is giving confidence to those otherwise reticent people who may be introverts, and were low in psychoticism.

Tanya Luhrmann, carried out a related study as a psychological anthropologist conducting participant research in Vineyard churches in Chicago and the San Francisco peninsula in America.¹⁰⁸ She considers the problem of evil in the context of bereavement experiences and suffering for Christians in an evangelical church setting.¹⁰⁹ She suggested that beliefs were about managing hope and pain, rather than actually believing that their ritualised actions made a physical difference to their situation.¹¹⁰ This led to an explanation of why there may be a strong virtuous identity in having a purpose. Luhrmann suggests that

modern believers don't need religion to explain anything at all. They have plenty of scientific accounts for why the world is as it is and why... What they want from faith is to feel better than they did

¹⁰⁵ Peter Kaldor, Leslie J Francis and Philip J Hughes, “Personality and Community Involvement: is churchgoing different?” *Journal of Beliefs and Values: Studies in Religion and Education* 23:1 (2002):101-105. Abstract, 101.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 102-104.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., Psychoticism was not a purgative term here, but an expression of their sensitivity to others.

¹⁰⁸ Tanya Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God* (USA: Vintage books, 2012), vi, and 367.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 267-299.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 295-299.

without faith. They want a sense of purpose; they want to know that what they do is not meaningless; they want trust and love and resilience... a God who helps them to cope¹¹¹

Luhrmann explains that it is not about the power and ability of God to deliver, even though this is spoken of, but about a faith in God which helps them to cope in all situations, and gives purpose, which, she suggests, is a result of the post-war emphasis on psychological therapy.¹¹² The Christian life is affirmed with increased intentionally Christian engagement, such as volunteering.

2.3.3 *Volunteers engaged with others*

Here I build on the self-development ideas of the previous sub-section, and look at personal benefits to volunteering, followed by how a route to volunteering might be found.

Robert Wuthnow's exploration of the parable of "The Good Samaritan" in the context of Christians in America, shows that it is interpreted by volunteers and preachers alike. It is a story which gives affirmation of one's personal faith expressed in charitable acts as a compassionate person doing God's will.¹¹³

This also accords with Luhrmann's thesis on the previous page. Volunteering in particular, thus provides the conduit for theological comprehension that is both contained and spoken about. Such a comprehension of volunteering drives the volunteer's willingness to offer time and effort which is independent of family

¹¹¹ Ibid., 295.

¹¹² Ibid., 296.

¹¹³ Robert Wuthnow, *Acts of Compassion: Caring for Others and Helping Ourselves* (USA: Princeton University Press, 1993), 159-187.

or financial dependency. Wuthnow suggests that such an independent understanding is good for mental health.¹¹⁴

Wuthnow suggests that volunteering is a socially accepted action which can be spoken about socially without too many disclosures of personal intent, even where there are links to compassion and love, inclusivity, rescue and journey.¹¹⁵ Volunteering also provides work that has boundaries where care ends; caring for family members rarely has such boundaries, and speaking of them may risk personal exposure. Helping others as a way of life requires personal disclosure if one is asked to explain it, yet volunteering provides a conventional activity of meaning in terms of purpose, which one can discuss socially, yet from which one can withdraw without guilt.¹¹⁶

Other personal benefits have been suggested in the form of self-interest.

VanHeuvelen investigates volunteer motivations in an American context and suggests that one motive to support state initiatives is from a desire of those who may be dependent upon the state to help others who are also dependent upon the state, as opposed to the earning population who had self-interest in reducing the state to minimise their tax burden.¹¹⁷ Thus the low-paid, students and the retired are more understanding of the need for state provision of welfare for others and thus volunteered more than the employed or income generating population.¹¹⁸

Becker and Dhingra, also in an American context, lists “wanting to gain

¹¹⁴ Ibid. Especially chapters 7 and 8

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 175-185.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ VanHeuvelen, “Religious Context of Welfare”, 269-270.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

practical experiences in a line of work, and wanting to protect property values” as two further motives for volunteering.¹¹⁹

The social context of volunteering may also be relevant and a benefit to the volunteer. The volunteer may be in a social environment of volunteering, and wish to be part of that community. Becker and Dhingra, writing in an American context, found that being “married with children”, having “close relationships with neighbours” and having a residential location, i.e. social context, is an important driver for volunteering.¹²⁰ They further found that:

Roughly three-quarters of our interviewees volunteer because of a direct connection to another person either someone within the organization or someone being served by it. Family ties, and children in particular, remain the most important conduit to volunteering.¹²¹

Indeed, Wuthnow presents volunteers as people who are “much more likely to have friends with people who were marginalised or disadvantaged than church members who have not done volunteer work.”¹²² Such volunteers are also more likely to be connected with the wider community, including those connected directly with their work such as “teachers... non-profit organisations... social workers... health professionals... service clubs... government officials, and lawyers.”¹²³ This benefits volunteer, church and social cohesion in general. The church’s influence and reach is also extended with the volunteers’ extended

¹¹⁹ Becker and Dhingra, “Religious Involvement and Volunteering”, 327-328.

¹²⁰ Becker and Dhingra, “Religious Involvement and Volunteering”, 324.

¹²¹ Ibid., 327.

¹²² Robert Wuthnow, *Saving America* (USA: Princeton University Press, 2004), 119.

¹²³ Wuthnow, *Saving America*, 121.

social contact in society, in a world that might otherwise be more individualistic and divided.

2.3.4 *Volunteering encouraged*

Jonathan Hill and Kevin Den Dulk, consider how schooling contributes to volunteering in the community, and if such involvement continued into adulthood.¹²⁴ The study was conducted in America and included schooling types which were “public, Catholic, Protestant, private nonreligious and homeschool”, where “public” meant state provided.¹²⁵ This contrasts with the UK where schooling is largely the role of the state, including religious schools, with some private provision taking 6.5% of the full number of pupils under 16 years of age.¹²⁶ In the UK the CofE and other faiths are invited to contribute in terms of faith schools (which make up about a third of the state funded schools in England) and the importance of teaching faith, as set out by the UK government.¹²⁷ Hill and Dulk find that worship attendance and attendance at religious groups increases volunteering (possibly due to continuing connections to organisations that “bridge adolescence and young adulthood”), whilst frequency of prayer and of scripture reading is shown to have no impact on

¹²⁴ Jonathan P Hill and Kevin R Den Dulk, “Religion, Volunteering and Educational Setting: The Effect of Youth Schooling Type on Civic Engagement,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* Vol. 52 (1) (2013): 179-197.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹²⁶ From “The Independent Schools Council” web site on Research: <https://www.isc.co.uk/research/> accessed 5th August 2019 at 11:11 hrs.

¹²⁷ UK Government web site: <https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/faith-schools> and various Education Acts, summarised in <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/31/part/II/chapter/VI> both accessed 3rd September 2018, the proportion of religious schools is noted in the BBC’s report “Catholic faith schools in academy switch” of 3rd December 2011, found on web site: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-15985615> accessed 5th August 2019 at 11:51hrs.

volunteering.¹²⁸ Faith schools all fare better at producing volunteers than “private nonreligious or homeschool”, and Protestant schools came out “top” for the number of youngsters who volunteer.¹²⁹ Motivational factors include parental pressure, faith importance and school practice, but these are difficult to identify, as the factors considered by each school differed.¹³⁰

In terms of family influences, Hendrik de Roest and Herman Noordegraaf, produce a limited study which looked for a link between Christians who volunteered and churchgoing.¹³¹ They report that “social networking during people’s upbringing had a major influence on their later motivation” with the rider that “there is a pattern of playing down the influence of churchgoing and playing up the influence of upbringing” in their Dutch context.¹³²

In looking at religious motivation, Jerry Park and Christian Smith attempt to understand how churchgoing Protestants respond to volunteering, again, in an American context.¹³³ Park and Smith’s conclusion is that the likelihood of both religious attendance and having parents who were believers (and especially parents who identify themselves as “theologically liberal”) increases the incidence of volunteering over non churchgoing people.¹³⁴ These volunteering children do not necessarily need to share their parents “theologically liberal” identification, but only their commitment to church attendance.¹³⁵ Otherwise,

¹²⁸ Hill and Dulk, “Religion, Volunteering and Educational Setting”, 195 and 192 respectively.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 193, including “Figure 1”.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 194.

¹³¹ de Roest, ““We learned it””.

¹³² Ibid., 223.

¹³³ Jerry Z Park and Christian Smith, ““To Whom Much Has Been Given...” Religious Capital and Community Voluntarism Among Churchgoing Protestants.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* Vol.39 (1) (2000): 272-286.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 283.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

church tradition is considered to be of little further influence.¹³⁶ These findings are based on church attendance and “participation in church activities”.¹³⁷ There is no discussion of faith with the individuals, though “unravelling the source of religious influence” is identified as a future study.¹³⁸

Wuthnow states that when looking at the role of faith in caring and compassion, “no single study provides answers”.¹³⁹ Wuthnow notes the importance of religious faith, and that “the frequency of an individual’s church attendance” increases the person’s wish to help people or offer charitable service.¹⁴⁰ Such service is enhanced when a church openly promotes specific channels of service.¹⁴¹ It is also important for local church members to be in relationships with other members who offer similar services.¹⁴² There is, however, enough evidence that belief in a personal God who cares, is also a factor in promoting social volunteering.¹⁴³

2.3.5 *Volunteering as a Christian vocation*

Some studies touch upon the notion of vocation, or “doing God’s will”. Einolf analysed “88 in-depth life narrative interviews undertaken as part of the 1995 Midlife in the United States (MIDUS) study” which “focuses on subjective religiosity... not merely psychological phenomena but [are] also social facts.”¹⁴⁴

¹³⁶ Ibid., 279 and 283.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 273.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 284.

¹³⁹ Wuthnow, *Acts of Compassion*, 124-125.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 127.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 128-129.

¹⁴⁴ Christopher J Einolf, “The Link Between Religion and Helping Others: The Role of Values, Ideas, and Language,” *Sociology of Religion* Vol. 72 (4) (2011) 435-455, 436.

Einolf chooses six themes from the responses to a previous survey which does not cover personal faith directly, but considers language and behaviour as social manifestations of internal religious faith.¹⁴⁵ He notes people as

considering religion a central part of their sense of identity, having a religious definition of morality, equating religion with helping others, feeling that God has a mission for their lives, being inspired by Jesus's sacrifice or example, and reporting a major change or gradual increase of religious faith with time.¹⁴⁶

Nevertheless, Einolf states that, "for highly pro-social people religion is very important" and that those who do voluntary work are more likely to give to church and charities.¹⁴⁷ Indeed, faith related to them in the form "that God has a mission for oneself ... [and] defining morality in religious terms was significantly related only to religious giving"¹⁴⁸. This may be from an American context, however, vitally, once people rejoice in religious growth with a theology that is very important to them in relating their lives to being "inspired by Jesus's actions and example, and equating religion and helping", then the motivation to help others in voluntary works is enhanced.¹⁴⁹ However, not all is well within volunteering in Einolf's studies, as he found that vested interest in raising income for the church lies behind some reluctance of the local church to encourage voluntary work beyond its own congregation. Einolf identifies that personal piety alone was needed in order to encourage giving to the local church. He deduces that if the congregation is to go beyond personal piety to social action beyond the congregation, then church leaders may fear that this

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 437.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 440.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 440.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 446.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

would distract the congregation from giving to the local church alone, and so reduce income.¹⁵⁰ The local church leader may then have a vested interest in avoiding teaching on social action (consciously or not), even if it brings a deeper faith or engagement in volunteering.¹⁵¹ Contrary to church leaders' fears, Einolf further discovers that those who conduct voluntary work beyond their congregation are also more likely to give to church and charities.¹⁵² Should a church leader acknowledge the former, but be unaware of the latter, there would indeed be a problem.

The Christians in Wier's UK study intentionally live in socially needy areas beyond their original congregation in order to put themselves in the way of supporting others freely.¹⁵³ Wier used the phrase "demonstrating God's love" yet discussed the ambiguity of this phrase, from an evangelistic discourse, to simply letting God's love be seen in their practical actions.¹⁵⁴ The intentional church leadership preaches on outreach and witnessing, which some members speak of as part of their work, however, other Christians in that intentional community speak of "'kingdom values' such as welcoming the stranger".¹⁵⁵ Wier laments the lack of study in the area, and notes the "dissonance" of those theological approaches.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁰ Einolf, "Link Between Religion and Helping", 446, as discussed above, 31-33.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Andy Wier, "Faith-based social action below the radar: a study of the UK charismatic-evangelical urban church," *Voluntary Sector Review* Vol. 5 (1) (2014) 29-45.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 38.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 39-40.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 42.

Christian volunteers may express a desire to volunteer in the community, to help the needy, but both Ann Morisy and Malcolm Torry acknowledge the dangers that lurk when helping individuals in need prevents social or political drives to prevent the conditions which brought about that need in the first place.¹⁵⁷ Clearly appropriate work and good supervision needs to be applied when involving volunteers. First supervision is required to ensure that the work undertaken is required and fulfils the cultural expectation of the body to which they volunteer as discussed earlier in this chapter. Secondly supervision is required to ensure that the volunteer maintains integrity in terms of their own faithful participation and remains under the discipline of decency and respect for clients who, being in need, will be vulnerable. Thirdly, supervision is required to ensure that the volunteer has something useful to offer. Some of the critique of volunteers may be unfair, as in the social reformer Elizabeth Fry being open to ridicule because her social reforms to improve conditions did not match up to the received wisdom of the professionals of the day for the “manly” (that is harsh) treatment of prisoners.¹⁵⁸ Farnell came across uninformed critiques of volunteers.¹⁵⁹ These included considering religious groups as unrepresentative of the community, based on a religious free notion of secular society, fear of proselytization by those of faith, social conflicts caused by religious difference in volunteers under the assumption that without religion all are equal.¹⁶⁰ Farnell readily refutes each of these especially noting the “strong social and civic commitment” of most religious volunteers who often have a natural affinity with

¹⁵⁷ Ann Morisy, *Beyond the Good Samaritan* (Great Britain: Bloomsbury, 1997), 37-39, and Malcolm Torry, *Managing God's Business: Religious and Faith Based Organizations and their Management* (Great Britain: Ashgate, 2005), 158-160.

¹⁵⁸ Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service*, 84.

¹⁵⁹ Farnell, *'Faith' in Urban Regeneration*, 2-3.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

the needs of the underprivileged, and strong social networks including community leaders and those they are supporting.¹⁶¹

There is a darker side to the supervision of volunteers. At its mildest perhaps is the risk of volunteer burnout. Yeung suggests that supervisors need to watch out for signs of exhaustion and isolation in volunteers, who are often asked to volunteer in multiple areas.¹⁶² At a much darker level, there can be predatory behaviour masquerading as the innocent helper. Prochaska, when talking of Victorian London in a particular instance, talks of visitors of the poor taking “occasional erotic pleasure” and “self-seeking gratification” in their visits.¹⁶³ Sadly such human failings will still be present, so robust safeguarding measures need to be in place. Having considered such pitfalls, it must be noted that such problems are not only an issue for volunteers, but will be present in the paid workforce too.

Yeung provides a helpful model with which to contain the motivation of volunteers in their varying tasks and personal motivation.¹⁶⁴ She provides indicators involving a healthy balance of volunteering being both a giving of service and a receiving of purpose, meaning or reward, albeit psychological or social.¹⁶⁵ Yeung therefore proposes four continuums with the following expressed poles: Getting-Giving; Continuity-Newness; Distance-Proximity and

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Anne Birgitta Yeung, “An Intricate Triangle – Religiosity, Volunteering, and Social Capital: The European Perspective, the Case of Finland,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol. 33, no. 3, (September 2004): 401-422, 417.

¹⁶³ Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service*, 72.

¹⁶⁴ Anne Birgitta Yeung, “The Octagon Model of Volunteer Motivation: Results of a Phenomenological Analysis,” *International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (March 2004): 21-46.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 23-26. See also Ann Morisy, *Journeying Out: A New Approach to Christian Mission* (UK: Continuum, 2004), 111-114 for a brief discussion of the mutual benefits of welfare work.

Thought-Action.¹⁶⁶ For example, a volunteer gives service, but may wish to get self-fulfilment, a sense of wellbeing or social recognition. Another volunteer may enjoy the closeness of the intimacy of conversation, whilst another the distance of being in the background of an organisation.¹⁶⁷ Such a model reminds both academics and volunteers of the mutual benefit of volunteering and is helpful for putting in context the self-development and benefits of volunteering discussed earlier in this chapter.¹⁶⁸

Clearly, given a safely supervised situation, volunteering conducted by Christians as part of living out their faith is good for them individually, as a group, and good for their sending churches, the church and the wider community. There remains something missing, generally expressed in terms of a lack of study in the area.

2.4 Application of volunteering in the Church of England Today

Swinton and Mowat recognise Practical Theology as engaging with the theology of the church which is in tension with

the continuing innovative performance of the gospel as it is embodied and enacted in the life and practices of the Church as they interact with the life and practices of the world.¹⁶⁹

So far this chapter has shown research surrounding Christian volunteering which provides the socio-political, culture-laden and psychological setting. I will next

¹⁶⁶ Yeung, "The Octagon Model", 32-38.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 33-36.

¹⁶⁸ 35-48.

¹⁶⁹ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, (Great Britain: SCM Press, 2006), 5.

consider how the local church is perceived as responding to those who volunteer in the community beyond their congregations.

2.4.1 *Volunteers and the local church*

Laura Olson, writing from a North American perspective, but writing of human psychology, studied the nature of culture and subculture in groups, and how each local church may operate in its response to social concerns.¹⁷⁰ Olson considers only the local “culture” of a church community which is “a cultural construction... of social identity” in a world of many “cultures” in its broadest meaning.¹⁷¹ She identifies the psychological need for many subcultures as giving rise to a variety of religious groups of collective attitude, defining a specific identity in a world of hierarchical, or benefit, or value claims.¹⁷² Olson considers that congregations generate their own subcultures to support a perspective of what is right or wrong both politically and religiously.¹⁷³ For me though, she ignores church and political cultures in terms of a national or global perspective. Olson’s observation is helpful to my thesis, as it is likely that the subculture of the local church congregation contains further subcultures, of which volunteers who work beyond the congregation is one. These subcultures, Olson explains, are affiliations that include all of life, and so involve politics and social norms which are simply accepted, though perhaps unacknowledged, and have strong bonds.¹⁷⁴ Olson suggests that a psychological attachment is made to such subcultures, resulting in an “us versus them” (in Olson “othering”) where

¹⁷⁰ Laura R Olson, “The Essentiality of “Culture” in the Study of Religion and Politics,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 50(4) (2011): 639-653.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 641 and 640 respectively.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 642-643.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 645.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 642-644.

others are held as distinct, often deficient, and sometimes demonised.¹⁷⁵ Tom VanHeuvelen, also writing from an American perspective, uses data from 17 countries. Like Olson, VanHeuvelen identifies a similar outcome of “us versus them”, though in the context of religious institutions and social citizenship.¹⁷⁶ Olson and VanHeuvelen each suggest both psychological and sociological reasons for subgroups within a congregation. Olson suggests that the psychology of such groups leads to the presentation of narratives to underline the identity and values of each subculture.¹⁷⁷

The church community may be made up of such subcultures, where volunteering beyond the local church congregation is only one such sub-group. Local church leadership appear to juggle with the variety of peoples within their congregations, or in the case of the CofE, their parishes, perhaps with an affinity to some people rather than others. The temptation of local church ministers (vicars and clergy staff) to only support a group that stands for the most vociferous in the congregation may be high, but in this case, almost half may have affinity beyond the congregation.

Like the CofE, the Church of Sweden is an episcopal church with a diocesan and parish structure that aims to cover every person in the country.¹⁷⁸ It also has active links with the CofE since the “Porvoo” agreement of 1994.¹⁷⁹ Bearing in mind the Swedish context is of a Social Democratic model, as opposed to the UK’s Liberal model, there remain useful insights, as each country encourages

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 646.

¹⁷⁶ VanHeuvelen, “Religious Context of Welfare”, 270 to 273.

¹⁷⁷ Olson, “Essentiality of “Culture””, 646.

¹⁷⁸ <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/english> accessed 4th June 2015.

¹⁷⁹ <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/churchofsweden/bilateral-relations> accessed 4th June 2015.

church involvement with welfare concerns.¹⁸⁰ Elisabeth Arborelius and colleagues investigated 24 church ministers and their parishes from the Church of Sweden in order to understand how each related to others in terms of their outreach.¹⁸¹ Arborelius refers to four Swedish language papers which suggested that “the Church’s message is understood to contain a message that differs radically from the needs people express”, that is, there is a gap between what the church teaches and what ordinary church members need in order to live their daily lives.¹⁸² Noting that in the context of Arborelius’s situation, “Most members are not churchgoers.”¹⁸³ The researcher’s methodology is to compare “ministers” (paid employees of the church holding direct pastoral responsibilities) with parishioners.¹⁸⁴ In analysing how ministers and parishioners each responded to the same questions, conclusions are drawn as to how each would view their interaction with people beyond the church.¹⁸⁵ Only one parishioner (5% of the cohort) spoke in terms of faith that was recognisable in church teaching, whilst ten ministers (48% of their cohort) primarily spoke in terms of faith that was recognisable in the local church teaching. The researchers are concerned that those ministers, the 48%, “neither interest nor attract parishioners”.¹⁸⁶ Though the study conducted by Arborelius is limited in number, covering churches in one city in Sweden, as a largely quantitative study it highlights what may be a problem in church leadership. This has

¹⁸⁰ 27-32.

¹⁸¹ Elisabeth Arborelius, Carl Reinhold Bråkenhielm and Thorleif Pettersson, “Is there a Gap between the Church and the People? Interviews with Parishioners and Ministers in the Stockholm District,” *Journal of Empirical Theology* 23 Issue 1 (2010): 82-103.

¹⁸² Arborelius, “Gap between Church and the People”, 85-86.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 87-91.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 102.

methodological implications in terms of how volunteers view theology compared with their local church ministers.¹⁸⁷

Remaining in Sweden, a more directly theological ethnography was sought in order to present the faith of the volunteer who worked beyond the congregation. Jonas Ideström had been “asked to participate in a conference arranged by a network of parishes in the Church of Sweden”, in order to “engage in constructive and critical reflection on certain social projects in their parishes.”¹⁸⁸ These “social projects” centred on “integration, religious dialogue, and aid for immigrants.”¹⁸⁹ In this Swedish context the church uses paid professionals in such support work, directed by the vicar and the “parish board”, nevertheless, volunteers and supporters from within the congregation are included in the study.¹⁹⁰ This led to the most theological approach to the volunteering of Christians in communities beyond their local congregations found to date. Ideström quoted Ola Sigurdson’s explanation of the separation between local church leadership and those who engage with the world beyond the congregation in terms of church governance that “withdraws from its theological self-understanding and the worldly realm becomes radically secularised”¹⁹¹. This leads to a credibility gap and a withdrawal of theological dialogue between the leadership of the church and those who practise their faith in the world beyond the congregation, as they may be seen as collaborators of secular public agencies.¹⁹² He also includes his previous experiences that when asking for

¹⁸⁷ See the Methodology chapter, 79ff.

¹⁸⁸ Jonas Ideström, “In Dialogue with the Gospel: Reflections on a method for Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology,” *Ecclesial Practices 1* (2014) 72-91, 72.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 73

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 75-77.

theological reflection in parishes “It commonly happened that those who spoke were people with a formal theological education, mainly clergy, while others were silenced.”¹⁹³ Ideström’s answer is to use scripture as a “Lectio Divina” - the practice of reading scripture out loud and asking for reflection in terms of one’s current experience.¹⁹⁴ Such a method indeed produces theological reflection from those in the congregation beyond the theologically educated.¹⁹⁵ However, Ideström reflects that his random selection of scriptures for reflection still meant that he had contributed to the shaping of the dialogue in the parish, even though he had avoided further participation.¹⁹⁶ Ideström reasonably suggests that the technique produced results in terms of a theological reflection from the otherwise unreflective congregation member.¹⁹⁷ However, Ideström does not ask which scriptures or theology may be relevant to the participants’ lives and work, requiring instead that his participants respond in terms where theology was abstracted from their application; an ability which they had not been trained for.

Looking to views that may reinforce the teaching orientation of church leadership in a UK context, Christopher Craig Brittain provides a reflection on theologians who might consider the church institution to be the only holder of Christian truth. Though writing in defence of ethnographic methods in ecclesial research, Brittain highlighted those, in particular John Webster, who believe the church institution as primarily gifted by God alone, and therefore to observe its

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 79-81.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 82-88.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 88-90.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 91.

practice is to consider the secondary nature of the church as a whole.¹⁹⁸ My point is not to follow the argument offered, but to draw out from the discussion the fact that there are those who believe that the church is God's to such an extent that they fail to see that "Ultimately, sanctification can only really be an event that occurs between God and the individual creature", that is, salvation comes from God, not the institution of the church (though the church may mediate this salvation, at its best).¹⁹⁹ Further, it may be that the church institution, as much as any individual within it, may be in need of confession and forgiveness of sins; all, individually and corporately, are responsible to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and accountable to God.²⁰⁰ In summary, the church may be tempted to stand aloof from criticism and above correction. However, I would suggest that the intentionally Christian volunteer who operates beyond the congregation, may be able to bring into that local church experiences from beyond itself which offers an alternative redemptive correction to that local church's views.

Helen Cameron provides an example from England, of local churches working in the community beyond their own congregation. Cameron et al reflect upon a project run in 2008 with "Housing Justice", a Christian based housing action group partnering with churches and with those of no faith.²⁰¹ This was overseen by a team, "Action Research: Church and Society [which] was initiated by the Pastoral and Social Studies Department of Heythrop College, University of

¹⁹⁸ Christopher Craig Brittain, "Why Ecclesiology Cannot Live By Doctrine Alone: A Reply to John Webster's 'In the Society of God'," *Ecclesial Practices* 1 (2014): 5-30, 8 and 11.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 21, 27-28 & 30.

²⁰¹ Cameron, and Bhatti, *Talking about God in Practice*, 130.

London in 2006” (ARCS)²⁰². They are asked to question how parish involvement with “Housing Justice” shelters “influenced the outlook of the churches and the faith practice of the individuals involved” and “enable the churches to reflect theologically on the impact of their involvement”²⁰³. In-depth interviews were carried out of both Christian volunteers who ran the service, and the homeless residents.²⁰⁴ The issues resulting from these questions are used to “trigger theological reflection”²⁰⁵. This approach is more promising than that of Idestrom’s presentation of abstract scriptures. The results of Cameron’s enquiry served to strengthen the need to explore the theological language of the volunteer and the ability of the theology of the local church to engage with them. Nevertheless, a number of quotes are produced which outline the theological illiteracy of the volunteers on the project, even compared to the “guests” on the project who received the care. There could be other reasons for this.

The ARCS research team intentionally used an “insider team” of those directly involved in the practice of the work, and “outsider teams” of researchers from the ARCS project.²⁰⁶ This is to intentionally “generate a range of perspectives that will stimulate reflection.”²⁰⁷ It is possible that this tension may have led to the church members, as “insiders”, feeling tested by the expert “outsider team”, resulting in pressure to give the right theological answers, rather than offer their own thoughts on what aspects of faith were important to them. Cameron’s

²⁰² Ibid., 1.

²⁰³ Ibid., 131 and 132.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 132.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 64-65.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 65.

appendices offer a set of questions that are considered.²⁰⁸ Her *Appendix 10* lists questions for the volunteers, giving no hint on how the questions may be opened up.²⁰⁹ For example “What is your motivation for doing this?” is a good question, but may take considerable exploration for those not experienced in theological reflection of the academy, however it is one of seven questions in the first part of a focus group question.²¹⁰ How the focus group responds is not shown. In Cameron’s work, it was not clear if the initial interviews took place in the context of serving the guests, in which case the volunteers may have been too busy to think through their replies. However, Cameron is able to introduce the concept of offering theology in “four voices”. Of particular use in this thesis are Cameron’s “operant theology” as a theology “embedded within the actual practice”, and “espoused theology”, being “the theology embedded within a group’s articulation of its beliefs”.²¹¹ Though I will be attending primarily to the “espoused theology” of the Christian volunteers, the other three voices, “operant”, “normative” and formal” make up the “four voices” which highlight the importance of theology to, with and from practice.²¹²

2.4.2 *Volunteers in the Church of England*

In the CofE, socio-political engagement (including volunteering) within a local church is subject to the view of individuals and sub-groups within the congregation. Such individuals and sub-groupings will have particular views of local tradition and national contexts which shape their approach to volunteering

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 160-179.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 176-177.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Cameron et al., *Talking about God*, Chapter 4, Figure 2, 54, and elsewhere throughout the book. This is also discussed in the Methodology chapter of this study, 89-91.

²¹² Ibid.

as discussed above. The local church is the responsibility of its leadership, and in the CofE, much is vested in the parish minister who is vicariously given “cure of souls” or care of each and every person in the parish, on behalf of the local bishop.²¹³

Though few other English speaking countries in the Western world may share the notion of responsibility to everyone in their nation, the CofE’s parish system requires it. This implies that a CofE parish church has a particular responsibility towards its surrounding parish, and its institutional setting. Volunteers may be part of this care for the local community or wider institutional care. Such volunteers may be taken for granted, but recent overtures from the UK government and reports from UK churches have attempted to offer some recognition.²¹⁴ Churches in the UK have particularly outlined the

²¹³ As broadly expressed by the CofE in their web site:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure.aspx> .

²¹⁴ House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee, *The Big Society: Seventeenth Report of Session 2010–12, Volume I, Report, together with formal minutes, oral and written evidence, 7 December 2011*, HC 902-I, Published by authority of the House of Commons, London: The Stationery Office Limited, 14 December 2011; also, Christians in Parliament report, *Faith in the Community: Strengthening ties between faith groups and local authorities*, UK Parliament all Party Report, June 2013; and from an influential “Think Tank” with an advisory committee chaired by Stephen Timms MP: Jonathan Birdwell, *Faithfull Providers: “Commissioning faith groups to provide services can save money and strengthen a community...”*, (Eindhoven: Demos, 2013). For UK church reports: David Jarvis, Fran Porter, Hannah Lambie and Kevin Broughton with Richard Farnell, *Building Better Neighbourhoods: The Contribution of Faith Communities to Oxfordshire Life* (Publication for Oxfordshire Stronger Communities Alliance, Coventry University Applied Research Centre in Sustainable Regeneration (SURGE), Coventry University, 2010) and Joy Bates and Stella Collishaw, *Faith in Derbyshire: Working towards a better Derbyshire; faith based contribution* (Derby: Derby Diocesan Council for Social Responsibility, April 2006). Further general church reports: Evangelical Alliance, *21st Century Evangelicals: A snapshot of the beliefs and habits of evangelical Christians in the UK – Summer 2014, Are we good neighbours?* (England: Evangelical Alliance, 2014). Anthea Rose, *Faithfully meeting local need: exploring partnerships, policy and faith in English faith-based organisations delivering services to the community* (London: Oasis College CLiCT, 2013). James Noyes and Philip Blond, *Holistic Mission: Social action and the Church of England* ed. Caroline Julian (England: ResPublica, July 2013).

disproportionate amount of volunteering that faith-based volunteers undertake in support of the community.²¹⁵

In the CofE, ecclesial traditions may vary amongst the members of one church, though the local church leadership may consciously or otherwise favour a particular tradition. Even local churches close to one another geographically may have different traditions, even if they are CofE and maybe within one diocese. It might be said that some other Christian denominations may uniformly be of the same tradition. It must be recognised that some research papers, notably from the USA, view tradition as groups of denominations, within the CofE, such is not the case.

VanHeuvelen made a statement relevant to congregations in the tradition of the CofE where,

individuals who align with the dominant religious tradition are more likely to give support to dominant institutions, as the institutional logics and practices are more likely to align with their moral systems.²¹⁶

In other words, the church tradition which had been alongside the national institution (such as the CofE) was more likely to be biased to the institutional view. There is however a recognised dichotomy between English churchgoers who align themselves as alongside the national institution, and others who considered the CofE now to only have a minor role and so are critical of the prevailing national institutional structures run by bigger institutions. Grace Davie put this in terms of the CofE's organisation being the church for all

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ VanHeuvelen, "Religious Context of Welfare", 272, citing, Jonathan P Hill, "Higher education as moral community: Institutional influences on religious participation during college," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* Vol. 48 (3) (2009): 515-534.

people in England, in contrast to a philosophical stance, which embraced the individualism of the enlightenment.²¹⁷ Thomas Ekstrand summarised the CofE as being a “critical partner” of the state since the time of Archbishop William Temple’s statements at the 1941 Malvern Conference.²¹⁸ Under Archbishop Justin Welby, the CofE released a “Letter from the House of Bishops” which ran to 56 pages, putting a critical focus on socio-political issues, as it pursued: “How should Christian men and women approach the General Election to be held on 7th May 2015?”²¹⁹ This appeared not so much a statement of a critical partner, but as a separate body, with advice for its members. However, the British House of Lords continues to include “The Lords’ Spiritual”, largely made up of CofE Bishops who contribute to legislature, which may be seen by some as at odds with holding an independent critical voice, so compromising a place of “critical partnership.”²²⁰ Clearly the CofE is a place where a divergence of attitudes to state continue. Of course, how the Archbishops and Bishops may express the church-state relationship of the CofE may not necessarily represent the way local church leaders or members of a congregation perceive it.

The relationship of the CofE as an established, but now relatively small church by comparison with the English population, leads to two possible outcomes for its members. In the earlier part of this chapter, I discussed the way in which

²¹⁷ Davie, *Religion in Britain*, xii. Summarised in the preface, and developed throughout the book.

²¹⁸ Thomas Ekstrand, “Thinking Theologically about Welfare and Religion,” in *Welfare and Religion in 21st Century Europe: Volume 2*, Anders Bäckström et al eds., (Great Britain: Ashgate, 2011), 107-150, 127.

²¹⁹ Church of England letter from the House of Bishops, web document downloaded 1st March 2015: <https://churchofengland.org/media/2170230/whoismyneighbour-pages.pdf>, 2.

²²⁰ The House of Lords (United Kingdom), “Members of the House of Lords> Members and their roles> Diverse Experience,” <http://www.parliament.uk/business/lords/whos-in-the-house-of-lords/members-and-their-roles/diverse-experience/> accessed 2nd March 2015.

individuals may have been influenced in their views on welfare and volunteering by a variety of social values that have been expressed in the UK since before the Second World War.²²¹ Several such views may exist in any one local church, or even within groups within a particular congregation. Such a divergence of views within the CofE contributes to an element of non-comprehension between Christian volunteers who expressly operate in the community beyond the church congregation and those who do not believe that it is their duty to contribute to such an alternative to state provision.²²² This may lead to some confusion within the local church as to which of these views are socio-political and which theological. Problems abound in terms of local church comprehension of those who volunteer beyond the congregation. These may be eased if a better understanding of the theological struggles of the Christian who volunteers beyond their congregation could be provided. Such a theological investigation may provide a relatively politically and culturally free area of discussion which might provide educative insight, regardless of politics or faith tradition. I will now review methodological approaches that have been used to study the theology of the ordinary Christian.

2.5 Volunteering and ordinary theology

Ordinary Christians can find value in volunteering, including volunteering beyond the local church congregation. Having considered cultural and socio-political effects upon the individual Christian and the church including the CofE in particular, there remains the task of establishing an appropriate theology with which to study the Christian volunteer in the CofE who volunteers beyond their

²²¹ 23-34.

²²² 39-40.

local congregation. A brief consideration is given to early studies of the ordinary Christian, and some recent approaches before settling upon Jeff Astley's ordinary theology.

2.5.1 *Ordinary theology: Precursors and alternatives*

In the middle of the twentieth century, Lesslie Newbigin developed a notion of what became known as folk religion. For Newbigin, folk religion is that where persons express faith together, even “where two or three are gathered” and are considered as much a church as the institution of the church. Even what was then considered a secular society Newbigin explained, was not devoid of values which might be considered God given and indeed God's salvation was for all, should the world realise it.²²³ Such folk religion then was both a challenge to the church as an institution, where in its notions of doctrine produced a risk that: “The moment you begin to think of it as a thing in itself, you go astray”; and a challenge to secular society, which evidently had its own values which in Newbigin's theology were provided by God.²²⁴ In his many writings on culture and mission, Newbigin saw the church (or Christian people together) as holding religious truths (their folk religion) distinctive from secular society, but forming a distinctive truth that may engage with the folk religious truths of society at large to reveal salvation in Christ.²²⁵ As an institution, the church was in danger of becoming other than truly Christian.²²⁶ But as a holder of folk religious ideas of its membership, the church might be seen as a true reflection of faithful

²²³ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Great Britain: SPCK, 1995), 6-7, 37-39 and 68-90.

²²⁴ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock 2008, previously SCM Press 1953), 28.

²²⁵ Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 1-11.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 128.

believing, open and vulnerable, a necessary requirement for engaging in mission with those of other faiths or apparently none.²²⁷ The writings of Newbigin might therefore be said to be the progenitor of the current trend to bring some understanding of this pre-academic or non-direct-academic theology of the un-theologically educated believer.²²⁸ Newbigin provides a call to the power of the ordinary Christian's folk religion, but not a plan for empirical research.

Closely allied to folk religion is lived religion. More recent exponents of this approach to the faith of the ordinary (un-theologically educated) believer include American researchers David Hall and Meredith McGuire.²²⁹ British researchers Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead might be described as using lived religion in their recent study of the people of Kendal: indeed they refer to McGuire for their description of the spirituality of the people they are investigating.²³⁰ Hall explains lived religion as being "rooted less in sociology than in cultural and ethnographical approaches to the study of religion and American religious history" the reference to America being specifically for that book.²³¹ Hall's contributors to the volume include two researchers, Daqnièle Hervieu-Léger and Nancy Ammerman, who specifically consider Christian linked lived religion, though each seek cultural, historical, social and institutional aspects to their studies.²³² McGuire begins her studies with a

²²⁷ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Great Britain: SPCK, 1995), 180.

²²⁸ Newbigin, *Household of God*, See Chapter 5, especially 127-128.

²²⁹ David D Hall, editor, *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* (United States of America: Princeton University Press, 1997) and Meredith B McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) respectively.

²³⁰ Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead et al., *The Spiritual Revolution* (Singapore: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 1-2 and 168.

²³¹ Hall, *Lived Religion*, vii.

²³² Daqnièle Hervieu-Léger, "Chapter two: "What Scripture Tells Me": Spontaneity and Regulation within the Catholic Charismatic Renewal," 22-40 and Nancy T Ammerman, "Chapter

reflection on the complexity of Christian Catholic faith, but progresses to use history, sociology and cultural studies to pursue where divergence from orthodox belief lies.²³³ Looking to the United Kingdom, Heelas and Woodhead also take on such aspects, with reflections that consider both Christian and non-Christian religions or spiritualities that have recently emerged, such as “holism, New Age, mind-body-spirit, yoga, feng shui, chi and chakra”.²³⁴ This certainly complexifies the issue of faith and theology, but requires teams of researchers (in the case of Heelas and Woodhead), and is therefore both too wide ranging and complex for my study.

Jeff Astley considered the value of the label “Implicit” and the work of Edward Bailey in a paper of 2013.²³⁵ Astley concludes that “implicit religion” in using “religion” is too broad a term for all of human life, positing that, “ordinary theology” “privileges beliefs and their linguistic expressions (“theology”)” whilst “theology” is “more deeply earthed” in concepts such as religious language, belief and “processes and forms of religious argument”.²³⁶ Martyn Percy proposed what he called “Implicit Theology” in pursuing a specifically Anglican theology inspired from his work as principal of a CofE Theological College.²³⁷ Percy states,

On the one hand, it is examining the basic-but-nascent theological habits (e.g., language, culture, worship, practice, etc) that more

Nine: Golden Rule Christianity: Lived Religion in the American Mainstream,” 196-216, both in Hall, *Lived Religion*.

²³³ McGuire, *Lived Religion*.

²³⁴ Heelas and Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution*, 1.

²³⁵ Jeff Astley, “Afterword: some reflections on implicit religion and ordinary theology,” *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* Vol. 16, No. 9 (2013), 975-978.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 976-977.

²³⁷ Martyn Percy, *Shaping the Church: The Promise of Implicit Theology* (Great Britain: Ashgate, 2010), 1, assuming “ministry formation” results from his time as Principle of Ripon College Cuddesdon, as noted on the cover sheet of the same book.

properly account for the daily life of churches, congregations and denominations. On the other, it is guessing at the hidden meanings in structures and practices that on the surface appear to be benign and innocent.²³⁸

This provides a more compelling complexification than the above previous approaches. However, the original intention belies the general usefulness of this approach: Percy is pursuing his own sociological agenda to explain the CofE in all its foibles and complexities, and calling it “implicit theology”, and so is branding something peculiarly Anglican, rather than opening up enquiry.²³⁹

Percy concludes that

the complex range of implicit dynamics that make and shape a congregation... the scholar needs to develop a deeper literacy that is attentive to the multifarious dynamics of power.²⁴⁰

This is more a statement that implicit theology is too complex to simply be undertaken by one researcher, or an attempt to declare the CofE as complex and so can only be implicitly understood. Neither are helpful to the methodology of this paper.

2.5.2 *Ordinary theology: Its use*

Jeff Astley’s concept of “ordinary theology” recognises the necessary theological content of all intentionally Christian activity, and its root in personal experience.²⁴¹ For Astley, it is only when one practises one’s faith that faith “becomes real rather than notional”.²⁴² For Astley, behind this faith is a

²³⁸ Ibid., 2.

²³⁹ Ibid., 99.

²⁴⁰ Martyn Percy, “Power in the Local Church: Locating the Implicit” in *Exploring Ordinary Theology: Everyday Christian Believing and the Church*, edited by Jeff Astley, and Leslie Francis (Great Britain: Ashgate, 2013), 62.

²⁴¹ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 34.

²⁴² Ibid., 32.

theology, or “religious assertions” which become real as when they are “self-involving; they commit us to action”.²⁴³ Christian volunteering is such an action, I would add. There is an added advantage for the context of my study here, in that Astley wrote from his “experience of over thirty years as an Anglican priest involved in various ways in parish ministry, chaplaincy, consultancy and Christian adult work”.²⁴⁴ This chapter began by exploring the literature which shows volunteering can be good for the individual, the wider community and is a vocation of the church. Astley affirms such practice of faith and theology, with the expectation that something good will come out of it for the individual, for the community and for the church. Astley states of such experiential knowledge, “And, behold, it is very good.”²⁴⁵ I therefore turn to Astley for some methodological insight.

Astley’s ordinary theology is proposed as an educational tool, setting a context of learning not only for the ordinary Christian, but also through recognising the value of the experience of the ordinary Christian to the church and academia.²⁴⁶ This educational tool is far reaching, starting not only in schools and at the level of family discussion, but reaching into the influence of social norms generated even at international and national level, “deeply rooted in the tangled morass of the mangrove swamps that constitute our lives.”²⁴⁷ In practice, theology experienced becomes “my truth”, going beyond merely doctrinal propositions to an actual embedded theology which the church and academy must not ignore.²⁴⁸

²⁴³ Ibid., 35.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., viii.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 15.

²⁴⁶ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 1-8.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 14, discussed 13-15.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 35.

A specific example of this is offered by Astley with respect to the changing doctrine of the CofE with regard to artificial contraception, which, challenged by ordinary Christians experiences, moved from “being utterly appalled by the idea in 1908... to the 1958 endorsement of family planning methods”.²⁴⁹ Astley explains the academy also changed in this way.²⁵⁰ The theology one begins to express in practice may have its roots entangled in culture and the world, but when put into practice as intentional Christian practice, the Christian will have a theological understanding, not always immediately apparent, which can only benefit the church and academy, even if it does cause conflict and change. For Astley, it is the “community of practice” where the apprentice becomes proficient.²⁵¹ However, the church and academy are soon brought into conflict with this personal expression of lived faith, “a person’s passion” as norms and inappropriate doctrines are challenged.²⁵²

Astley attends to “*the theology and theologising of Christians who have received little or no theological education of a scholarly, academic or systematic kind.*” (Astley’s italics).²⁵³ He set out to produce a book which

does not purport to be any sort of definitive study. It should be thought of as no more than an *essay*... Nor am I presenting here a carefully researched empirical account... more a plea for the study of ordinary theology than an example of such a study.²⁵⁴ [Author’s italics.]

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 159.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 160.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 8.

²⁵² Ibid., 20-25

²⁵³ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, further expanded with several contributors in Jeff Astley and Leslie Francis, Editors, *Exploring Ordinary Theology: Everyday Christian Believing and the Church* (Great Britain: Ashgate, 2013), quotation from *Ordinary Theology*, 56.

²⁵⁴ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, viii.

Thus he proposes an approach which will privilege the theological thought of the ordinary Christian, that is, one without theological training, which is at least equal to the theological thought of the academic. As Astley states in terms of ethnographical description:

even in *describing* your theology I am implicitly engaged in a conversation between my theology and yours... as I listen to you talk about, and see you practise, your faith...²⁵⁵ [Author's italics.]

There is a slight problem with Astley, as to exactly where to draw the line between academic theology and the “ordinary Christian” who has “received little or no theological education of a scholarly, academic or systematic kind.”²⁵⁶ This definition might be compromised if the local minister is a particularly good theological educator offering evening groups on theology; or if the “ordinary Christian” has read a series of academic theological books and has a systematic approach from training in another discipline; or if they had undertaken a course at a local theological college to expand their theological understanding.

In his subsequent book *Exploring Ordinary Theology* Astley invites a number of authors to contribute to the debate, either with new research, or a reflection on their existing work in the broad context of this ordinary theology.²⁵⁷ Two chapters contribute to the debate by presenting ordinary Christians who present a theology which they have discerned from their own reading of the Bible. Andrew Rogers presents findings from ordinary Christians who have been supported by an active church leader.²⁵⁸ Though Rogers found that the ordinary

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 109.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 56.

²⁵⁷ Astley, *Exploring Ordinary Theology*.

²⁵⁸ Andrew Rogers, “Congregational Hermeneutics: Towards Virtuous Apprenticeship,” in *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, ed Astley, 117-126.

theology may not fully accord to the local church teaching, such teaching was given and Rogers recognises that the active Christian may have as equal a claim on the value of their interpretation as the taught church leader.²⁵⁹ Matthew Barton and Rachel Muers present a chapter where such ordinary Christians have extended their theological understanding and practice independently of their local church leaders, presenting Biblical explanations of their active vegetarianism.²⁶⁰ Barton and Muers present a cohort of committed Christian vegetarians, who hold Biblical explanations for their choice which is simply not comprehended by their local church.²⁶¹ Another author who stands out in this volume is Michael Armstrong, who pursues the notion of “life after death”, comparing the ordinary Christian’s view with orthodox academic theology.²⁶² Though Armstrong identifies aspects of theology which might be considered lacking in some ways from the academic study of the subject, Armstrong concludes that academic study would be the weaker for not taking seriously their understandings, as a reflection of where the Holy Spirit may be guiding their conclusions.²⁶³ No contributors offer research in the context of churchgoing volunteers. However, both Ann Christie and Andrew Village apply ordinary theology to members of the CofE, and their work will provide insights and comparisons appropriate to my proposed study.²⁶⁴ Both Village and

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 124.

²⁶⁰ Matthew Barton and Rachel Muers, “A Study in Ordinary Theological Ethics: Thinking about Eating,” in *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, Astley, 169-177.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 171 and 174.

²⁶² Michael Armstrong, “Extraordinary Eschatology: Insights from Ordinary Theologians,” in *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, editor Astley, 97-105.

²⁶³ Ibid., 103-104.

²⁶⁴ Ann Christie, “Jesus as Exemplar”, and Andrew Village, “The Bible and Ordinary Readers”, both in *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, editor Astley, 77-85 and 127-136 respectively.

Christie employ different methodologies and so are discussed further in my methodology, *Chapter 3*, and again referred to in the analysis of *Chapter 5*.²⁶⁵

Mark Cartledge also cited Astley's *Ordinary Theology* as inspiration for his study with "*Rescripting Ordinary Pentecostal Theology*" in his book's title.²⁶⁶ However, he endeavours to use "ordinary theology" principles to inform a congregational study of a Pentecostal church in Birmingham, rather than studying the ordinary theology of the individual congregants alone, hence the "rescripting" in the title.²⁶⁷ Though effective for the study of the Pentecostal church in question, it is not an exercise in putting the theology of the ordinary Christian to the fore and so is not directly relevant to my study. Nevertheless, the study concludes with recommendations for improving worship and preaching for the benefit of congregants.²⁶⁸

2.6 Summary of themes

In this chapter I pursued an overview of a variety of influences upon voluntary social welfare involvement for the Anglican Christian in the UK that have been formative within recent decades. This overview was produced to explain the place of volunteering in social welfare beyond the local church congregation,

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Mark J Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit: Rescripting Ordinary Theology* (Great Britain: Ashgate, 2010), 15-16.

²⁶⁷ Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit*, 22, of a church listed as "Assemblies of God or Elim church denominations" in Birmingham; 16-18, where the oral expression of faith by focus groups (ordinary Christians) would be one contributing factor in constructing the "Pentecostal discourse" of the worship and witness of that congregation and church community.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 179-190.

and to find what may have been overlooked or in need of further research, and so lead to appropriate research questions.

2.6.1 *Engagement of Christian volunteers*

Social welfare approaches in Europe and Western nations have set the broader scene which may have informed political and social thinking in the UK.²⁶⁹

Capitalism, Beveridge, the NHS, and notable Prime Ministers of recent decades are portrayed as salient to the UK's collective history and so, together with influences from Western nations which may impact the nation's collective memory, especially in connection with social welfare volunteering.²⁷⁰

Universally, social welfare needs ordinary volunteers from their populations in order to soften the bureaucracy of the state, whatever welfare model is used, as suggested by Dinham and Esping-Andersen.²⁷¹ Similarly, religion is widely credited with encouraging social welfare volunteering.²⁷² Hill and Dulk showed that the Christian faith schools in their study had some influence upon the social engagement of volunteers, depending on tradition and school practice.²⁷³ Olson, VanHeuvelen, Arborelius and to some extent Ideström and Brittain show that individual or family regard for differing relevance of socio-political influences leads to the creation of various sub-cultures and groupings, within a nation, locality and church congregation. This leads to a lack of comprehension between differing sub groups, such as those who volunteer in social welfare

²⁶⁹ 19-20.

²⁷⁰ 21.34.

²⁷¹ 24-25 and 28-30.

²⁷² 24-25, 30-35 and 57.

²⁷³ 41-42.

verses those who regard the state as more than sufficient at providing appropriate social welfare.²⁷⁴

Within the UK the CofE provides a disproportionately large number of volunteers.²⁷⁵ The CofE provides a wide variety of church traditions and socio-political settings and outlooks.²⁷⁶ Extrapolating research conclusions from Australia and America, it may also be expected that whilst there are particular psychological types who may be drawn to volunteering, within local churches, those who volunteer include all psychological types.²⁷⁷ Though volunteering in a local church setting may simply be increased by asking members to volunteer, and volunteering may be enhanced when family ties are involved, personal theology is likely to make some contribution.²⁷⁸

Such social welfare volunteering benefits the community beyond the local church by enhancing the social bonding and social cohesion.²⁷⁹ Looking at research from America, Sweden and the UK, local church members and/or leaders may be unaware of the value to such work, and the way in which the experience of such volunteers may be used to inform the local church's mission to the community beyond its own congregation.²⁸⁰ Einolf also showed that such volunteers, though involved in voluntary work beyond the local church were

²⁷⁴ 49-52.

²⁷⁵ 57-58.

²⁷⁶ 34-35 and 56-60.

²⁷⁷ 36-37 and 49-50.

²⁷⁸ Ibid and 40.

²⁷⁹ 40 and 49-55.

²⁸⁰ 44-45 and 50-54.

also more likely to be involved with and give to the local church, a point missed by many church leaders.²⁸¹

Local church communities may include such a breadth of socio-political and family influences, yet they also provide collective worship and theological approaches to life which enable meaning making in terms of life experience. Luhmann provided an explanation of meaning making for those of faith who look to God for meaning, and wish to respond by caring for others as they believe God wished and did for them. Luhmann proposed that one looked to God not so much as to have God change personal or social distress, but to give meaning to such distress and so provide a way to address personal and social issues through engaging with God in prayer and through social action. Whilst Luhmann suggested that such action was psychologically helpful, Yeung offers models of reciprocity of needs that volunteers will be aware of, as they experience that they receive as well as give.²⁸²

The common link that can bind together those holding differing socio-political, cultural and psychological drives in any one local church is their common understanding that theology is important, providing a common language and worship of the local church congregation. Nevertheless, in terms of practical outlooks on life, including of the value of volunteering in social welfare, sub-cultures may remain within any one local church due to the different socio-political views, psychological types and what theology has come into play as a result of each person's engagement with the world.²⁸³ Such a difference

²⁸¹ 44-45.

²⁸² 37-38 and 47-48.

²⁸³ 56-60.

between the sub-culture in which Christians who volunteer in the community beyond their local church congregation and other sub-cultures within their local church coincides with the statements made amongst researchers of such Christian volunteers, that something is missing from their research.

Missing elements in relation to faith were common amongst researchers of Christian volunteering. Kaldor, Francis and Hughes in their research on personality of volunteers suggested that there was another “driver” to volunteering where religion was involved.²⁸⁴ Park and Smith identified “unravelling the source of religious influence” as a future study.²⁸⁵ Wuthnow, when looking at how faith affected voluntary roles of caring, said that the links were unclear as no single study gave a conclusive explanation.²⁸⁶ Einolf sought to consider the personality of those who as a result of their faith, endeavoured to contribute to social welfare.²⁸⁷ He noted that religion was very important to that cohort, (though not necessarily in the same way as their local churches) even though personal faith was not directly studied.²⁸⁸ Wier lamented the lack of study of the theology of Christians in the UK who in their commitment to support social welfare intentionally lived in socially needy areas.²⁸⁹ In her study of Swedish church leaders and congregation members with regard to social welfare Arborelius found that there was a considerable difference between the theological responses of ministers and congregation members to the same questions of social welfare.²⁹⁰ Continuing with studies of Swedish churches,

²⁸⁴ 37.

²⁸⁵ 42-43.

²⁸⁶ 43.

²⁸⁷ 43-45.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ 45.

²⁹⁰ 50-52.

Ideström explored the theological responses of Christians (both volunteers and church paid professionals) who volunteered or worked in social welfare beyond the local church congregation.²⁹¹ Similarly to Arborelius, he found a difference of theological understanding between church leaders and those who worked beyond the church, but noted that his own methodology of presenting scriptures for reflection may have affected the results.²⁹² Arborelius found that in her study, Church leaders responded theologically, whilst those without theological training were reluctant to offer a coherent theological response: perhaps a different methodology may yield more theology?²⁹³ Cameron’s research in the UK into volunteers within housing justice produced examples of theological illiteracy amongst the Christian volunteers which exceeded that of the “guests” of the project: this is far from intuitive and requires an explanation.²⁹⁴ Ordinary theology practitioners Christie and Village are discussed in the Methodology pages of this thesis, and part of my study is to develop a methodology which better represents the theological voice of the ordinary Christian who is intentionally working in the environment beyond the local church congregation.²⁹⁵

The above shows that there is a need for further research into the theology which Christian volunteers may be considering as they attempt to respond to their experiences as Christians who are committed to social welfare support as a result of that belief. In particular, the theology of such volunteers appears to

²⁹¹ 51-53.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ 54-56.

²⁹⁵ 68-69 and 93-97.

either be absent or in some way in need of more clarification, perhaps with a methodology which enables the voice of such volunteers to be heard more clearly. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the CofE contains within its being a breadth and variety of traditions and socio-political views, making it a worthwhile denomination within which to research the volunteer. Further, the study of the theology of the volunteer involved in social welfare may help to present to the church issues of relevance to the community beyond its congregation, and hence enhance mission.

I therefore have the first research question:

Within the Church of England do ‘ordinary’ lay Christians who practice intentional Christian work engage theologically within such a practice?

2.6.2 An approach to the theology of Christian volunteers

In this chapter, a number of approaches to the study of Christians in their everyday settings have been considered, including Newbigin’s folk religion, Hall and McGuire’s lived religion and Bailey’s implicit religion, especially as developed by Percy.²⁹⁶ Though I concluded that Astley’s Ordinary theology provided the ideal approach for my study, these other approaches provided some insights.

Newbigin warned against giving a specific label to the theology that may be owned by those outside church leadership or academia.²⁹⁷ For Newbigin, the theology of such faithful people needs to be recognised as necessarily open and

²⁹⁶ 60-64.

²⁹⁷ 61.

vulnerable in order for it to function as a missionary force in the world beyond the church.²⁹⁸ Such a faith needs to be approached sensitively, and with reserved judgement. The other approaches mentioned all provided levels of complexification with which to attempt to tease out such theology, but either required considerable resources, or were in order to fulfil a specific aim, as in Percy's implicit religion.²⁹⁹ Earlier, and in terms of practical theology, Swinton and Mowat suggest that theology is "embodied and enacted in the life and practice of the Church" which would include the action of Christians who volunteer in social welfare situations.³⁰⁰ Cameron helpfully highlighted "four voices" of theology, two of which (the operant and espoused) centre on the practitioner, and so provides tools with which to explore the theology of practice.³⁰¹ The "espoused theology" of Christian volunteers will be particularly helpful to my study. For me it was Astley's ordinary theology which provided a manageable approach of the study of Christian volunteers in the CofE as it embraced both the sensitivity to the ordinary theologian and provided a way to explore the theology embodied in their life and practice. The only rider to Astley's approach is that I simplified Astley's definition of an "ordinary Christian" to be a Christian who is neither a professional theological academic nor a church leader.³⁰²

Astley's concept of ordinary theology is based on the proposal that one's faith becomes real when practiced, so one is therefore self-involved and

²⁹⁸ 61-62.

²⁹⁹ 62-64.

³⁰⁰ 48.

³⁰¹ 55-56.

³⁰² 67.

committed.³⁰³ Astley expects such practice to be as a result of conscious application based on family discussion and influenced by social norms generated at international, national and local levels.³⁰⁴ The individual experience affected by such influences becomes embodied in a form of personal “truth” which goes beyond that of their local church or academic theory.³⁰⁵ Such personal “truth”, or I would say the personal faith or theology of the Christian volunteer, will, Astley expects, be entangled in world and local culture, making their theological understanding not immediately apparent to the church or academy, despite its value to each.³⁰⁶ Astley is aware that the theology which may be found at work in the lives of the ordinary Christian may cause conflict and change for the church and academy (as in the issues of birth-control in 20th century Britain), but insists that this process is essential for true theology to flourish.³⁰⁷ The work of Rogers affirms this disjoint between the ordinary theology and the local church, whilst studies into vegetarianism by Barton and Muers show where the theology of the committed Christian vegetarian may have gone far beyond the more limited comprehension even of their own local churches.³⁰⁸ Finding the theology of the Christian involved in intentional Christian work, such as volunteering in social welfare beyond the local church in the CofE will not be straightforward, or even intuitive. The work of Christie and Village, shows that a simple question and answer approach to understanding to the ordinary Christian’s theology may not immediately

³⁰³ 64-65.

³⁰⁴ 65.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ 65-66.

³⁰⁷ 66.

³⁰⁸ 67-68.

reveal a response, even in the name of ordinary theology.³⁰⁹ Something more needs to be explored, and in attempting to find out, I hope to contribute to the debate on Astley's ordinary theology.

I therefore have a second research question with which to complete my study:

How do the implications of such theological engagement by 'ordinary'

Christians, active in their service, contribute to current debate on ordinary theology?

³⁰⁹ 68-69 and 93-97.

3. METHODOLOGY

As noted in the introduction, I will explore what theological statements are made by Christian volunteers who volunteer in the community beyond the church congregation. In particular I will be asking Christians who are members of the CofE, or have a background in the CofE, who work with offenders or the deaf community. An appropriate approach towards appreciating such volunteers will be Jeff Astley's ordinary theology. This leads to two research questions:

- 1) Within the Church of England do 'ordinary' lay Christians who practice intentional Christian work engage theologically within such a practice?
- 2) How do the implications of such theological engagement by 'ordinary' Christians, active in their service, contribute to current debate on ordinary theology?

In order to address these questions I will be generating a methodology based on ordinary theology from Astley; "theology in four voices" from Cameron; a qualitative practical theological empirical approach from Swinton and Mowat; together with a conversational interview technique and analysis from Riessman, with which I will interpret and code the data. I will be discussing my approaches to these aspects before outlining how I use each of these in practice.

3.1 Positioning the research

3.1.1 Locating a suitable cohort

Firstly, volunteers are not motivated by receiving payment, but primarily driven by a calling to a particular human need. Of course some volunteers may also be

working in order to build up a CV or explore their proclivity for such work in a future career. Similarly, some volunteers may be volunteering in order to have alternative contributions to their life experience, such as having work beyond their job, or beyond the demands of family. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, volunteering is not all “one way” volunteer to client, and this does not negate the calling of the individual.³¹⁰ Volunteers will offer support from a place of Christian vocation without a dependence upon income from an employer. Such financial dependence might require that they fulfil their employer’s demands, not the demands of their calling, so volunteers were chosen over those who were in paid employment or any financial reward or obligation such as a community sentence.

Secondly, I endeavour to investigate the theological engagement of individual lay Christians. I therefore needed a cohort that did not engage directly with the operation of their local church. I wish to research how each volunteer navigates theologically and independently of the direct influence of their local church, so that their thinking and any stated theologies might not simply be a repetition of what their local church has relayed to them, but is a product of their own engagement with their intentional Christian work. The following cohorts work beyond their local community, and so should be ideal for this purpose, even if limited to two aspects of volunteering in one Diocese at a particular time.

As a former “Co-ordinating Prison Chaplain” and as the current chair of the “Diocesan Council for the Deaf” (DCD), I am familiar with the approach and language of these volunteers. Volunteers with the deaf usually work as

³¹⁰ 38-40, and 47-48.

individuals to individuals. Those working in offender related work usually work in teams which will meet and pray together before undertaking their volunteering tasks with groups or individuals. Using these two distinct cohorts may offer an element of triangulation, due to the difference in approach, in addition to the different areas of social care. The advantage of using these volunteers will be that as researcher, I will be familiar with the local culture, language and approach of such active ordinary Christian volunteers. These cohorts will be of individuals from a variety of churches within one large Anglican Diocese in the Province of Canterbury, where I have spent the last 20 years of ministry. I will no longer be participating directly in the work that the volunteers continue to be involved with. I will be a volunteer of sorts, as I am giving my time freely to both Charing the DCD, and to carrying out this study. I have worked in the field as a chaplain, for prisoners, prison staff and any visitors, but that is no longer my role. I am currently working in the field of supporting the deaf, but not directly as I have responsibility to the chaplains, but not directly to the deaf communities or the volunteers. There is value in this distance, as my remote involvement should reduce any concern that I would apply my knowledge to their current situations. There is sufficient distance from the volunteers I will interview for them not to be concerned by my involvement.

A chapter on “Insider /outsider perspectives” by Kim Knott was helpful here.³¹¹

Knott suggests a continuum from “OUTSIDER Complete observer” to “INSIDER Complete participant” with “Observer as participant” and

³¹¹ Kim Knott, “Insider/outsider perspectives,” in *The Routledge Companion to The Study of Religion: Second Edition* ed., John Hinnells (Great Britain: Routledge, 2010), 259-273.

“Participant as observer” as positions along the continuum (directly quoting Knott and her capitalisation).³¹² In terms of this scheme, I see myself positioned as “Observer as participant” insofar as I will participate in the discussion of the volunteers experiences as if I were participating, yet I will be observing. My role as “student researcher” and being at least one-step removed from the volunteering in each case will give appropriate distance. Yet knowledge from past and current work should give me an intimate understanding of the positioning of the volunteers and their use of language. I will be able to be open about my place as researcher, yet will be close enough to the volunteers’ worlds to be able to make an etic (outsider) account from an emic (insider) position, a place Knott gives in an example of such “Observer as participant” mode.³¹³ I will be “no longer compelled to compartmentalise the world of faith and the world of scholarship.”³¹⁴ Almost all the volunteers will also either be, or have been, CofE members, working intentionally as Christians. There will be some degree of co-construction involved; but then a purist might argue that co-construction is part of the process as soon as one person observes another. By being open about my previous knowledge and using the knowledge as best I can to understand, rather than direct, should reduce co-construction. I consider my stance in terms of Gadamer’s “horizon of understanding”.³¹⁵ My past experiences will lead me to have both a common horizon of understanding with the participant volunteers, whilst my academic training offers a further horizon within which to write this thesis. The merging of horizons of understanding is

³¹² Ibid., 262.

³¹³ Ibid., 266-267.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 270.

³¹⁵ Hans-George Gadamer, *Truth and Method: Second Revised Edition* trans., Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G Marshall (United States of America: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004 –first published 1975 in German 1960), for a summary see xi.

what Gadamer would call “theory of hermeneutic experience” building on the understanding due to common historical or cultural links between two people, extended by communication - volunteer to me.³¹⁶ By extension this might further be applied to the reader of this paper (the academy), and hopefully through subsequent engagement with the church, in order to apply what is found.

3.1.2 A suitable theological approach with which to study practice

The meaning of “theology” is important in these questions. I place Jeff Astley’s ordinary theology in the title of this thesis and in the second research question, as it is on his interpretation of theology that this study depends. As discussed in the previous chapter Astley considers the ordinary believer as having no theological education.³¹⁷ However, following Astley’s argument, the ordinary Christian is still able to talk about God from their own experience, whereas theology as an academic subject is scholarly, pursuing a rational discipline or series of disciplines, giving it elite status.³¹⁸ He states that

although theology becomes a ‘science of God’ at one end of the intellectual spectrum, its definition can also include ‘reflection upon personal and group experience’ in ‘experiential theology’.³¹⁹

It is the latter definition of theology, based on reflections on volunteers’ experiences, which I will pursue and that will be paramount to this study.

Astley proposed that the ordinary theology was for ordinary Christians “*who have received little or no theological education of a scholarly, academic or*

³¹⁶ Ibid., 301-371.

³¹⁷ 66-67.

³¹⁸ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 53.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

systematic kind.” (Astley’s italics).³²⁰ However, Astley also stated that “Life is all experience” and further, that faith is “expressed and performed daily at my home and work place and play, in my life choices and through the hard uphill slog of my flawed discipleship.”³²¹ In that case, the learned and erudite theologian would still be subject to an emotional and/or spiritual response to life, including Christian worship or prayer. Yet further the same theologian is not expected to be expert in every aspect of theology: indeed there may be some aspects of theology where they would be the first to recognise that they had little learning of at all. Theological training may give them some structure of intellectual comprehension if they were to reflect, but life is more than intellect. Conversely, one may find a “non-theologically educated Christian” who had undergone excellent teaching at their local church setting, or had a natural propensity for theological understanding. It is also likely that the ordinary Christian had undertaken a confirmation course (in the case of the CofE) or other course at the start of their church membership in addition to any church teaching courses, including the *Alpha!* course and Lent study groups. Further the “non-theologically educated” may include a person trained to a high degree in another discipline, but able to bring to bear that discipline upon theology. Astley wanted to respect people who based their theology on experience rather than classroom, but this is something all people do. I therefore was happy to relax the strict “no teaching” aspect as it was not possible to establish exactly where this line lay for any person, but I drew the line at training for the priesthood and clergy spouses, or their trainers. In the CofE training for the

³²⁰ Ibid., 56.

³²¹ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 20.

priesthood had extensive training, commonly involving their spouses. Such training is delivered over several years, and followed up with continued in post professional training.

As discussed in the last chapter, at their best, the ordinary Christian wishes to direct their work as “habitus” orientated towards their comprehension of God and God’s will, which, when reflected upon, becomes theology, and it is from this that academic theology will be derived.³²² Astley acknowledges that academic theology, charged with pursuing a reflective mode is too easily separated from its experiential origins, as it draws upon a long existing “theologically articulated Christian tradition, or of the scholarly author himself or herself.”³²³ I would agree with Astley that,

this pattern is too prescriptive for our needs, and places too much emphasis on the critical, reconstructive nature of theology and too little on grounding theology from the outset of religious life. We need, rather, *to begin with the working*: to look and see what works in practice, and then to reflect theologically on that.”³²⁴ [Astley’s italics.]

In other words, the experience of the ordinary Christian, derived from their reflection upon their work, is the very source of the theology which the church needs to learn from. It is this theology that this thesis is pursuing.

I write of the volunteers’ voices. Helen Cameron et al’s “theology in four voices” provides an approach suited to the voice of the ordinary Christian’s faith and theology.³²⁵ In this thesis, I consider the individual or “group’s articulation

³²² Ibid., 54-55.

³²³ Ibid., 73.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Cameron, *Talking about God*, 54.

of its beliefs” (espoused theology).³²⁶ Thus a language and comprehension of ordinary theology may be provided to explain the meaning of the theology of the volunteer which Astley articulates above. Further development of Cameron’s four voices and my use of them will be considered later in this chapter.³²⁷ Clearly, to consider the theology arising from voluntary practice, a form of empirical practical theology will be most appropriate.

The ordinary Christian may well use a form of the pastoral cycle to help them reflect. Indeed, back in the early 1980s when I was a Christian working as a Chartered Engineer, I puzzled over the ethical dimensions of my work in developing new technologies which might be used for good or ill. The booklet I found at that time was the forerunner of the pastoral cycle, being based, as it stated, upon the Roman Catholic Cardinal Joseph Cardijn’s “Review of Life Method or SEE, JUDGE ACT” (the direct quote includes the capitalisation).³²⁸ This was an early form of the pastoral cycle now so commonly used in practical theology. As the cyclical element suggests, the pastoral cycle requires a re-visiting of the subject of study for a renewed understanding. What is needed in this study though, is an interpretive method which may enable the practitioner to express the theology which underpins their work. To return to the subject with a plan to make a difference would be to risk co-construction by imposing a theology generated by the researcher. Conversely, some sort of biography or case study would potentially give voice to the volunteer, but without an element of testing their responses. This would be unlikely to produce an interpretation

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ 97-99.

³²⁸ Family and Social Action, *The Person in Work*, (Hinkley Leicestershire: Family and Social Action, 1982), 9.

that could engage with existing theological studies, as most volunteers have no theological education above that formed in their local communities and churches. A qualitative approach will be used, but one which will open dialogue to explore meaning.

According to Louis Cohen et al, semi-structured questions will enable volunteers to raise their own issues, so that the interviewer may press for a deeper reflection.³²⁹ A form of conversational or narrative analysis will be used to encourage ready speech from the participants. It is expected that responses may be very fluid when discussed by each individual. Coding will therefore need some form of Cohen's "stimulus equivalence".³³⁰ The main interpretation work will be in looking for common themes amongst the many reflections voiced during the interview process. The use of narrative analysis as proposed by Riessman will be helpful in this regard.³³¹ The detail of this approach is discussed in the latter part of this chapter.³³²

Pete Ward situates practical theology as "faith seeking understanding" using the statement from Anselm to explain what theology is, and a practice of "habitus" originating from Aristotle.³³³ Practical theology, of which ordinary theology is one expression, is then stated in terms which seek understanding from faith, so is thus theological, whilst focussing attention on the inherently participatory

³²⁹ Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison, *Research Methods in Education*, 7th Edition (Great Britain: Routledge, 2011), 235-236.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 412.

³³¹ 101-102.

³³² 108-111.

³³³ Pete Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology: Mission, Ministry and the Life of the Church*, (United States of America: Baker Academic, 2017), 28 and 17 respectively.

nature of such theology where faith is practised (*habitus*).³³⁴ Practical theology therefore appeals directly to my search for the theology of lay Christians who practise intentional Christian work. Further, Ward observes that faith is given as “Knowing God is a work of the Holy Spirit in the believer.”³³⁵ That is, to seek faith, one may first be given sufficient faith by God, usually in the context of others, in order that one has a sense that there is more of faith to be discovered, and that seeking is our response.³³⁶ Therefore, “Faith is always embodied and communal.”³³⁷ The communal includes both the culture within which the Christian is embedded, and the faith which has been “handed down” from the Christian community, or local church.³³⁸ Here I place both a cultural and faithful reference by situating my study “Within the Church of England”, a church I know well. Some regard to the pervading culture has already been explored in the previous chapter, as has the effect of membership of the CofE within the wider Christian church and culture. It is into this complexity of faith, from gift to experience, that will enable the Christian volunteers to give some account of their theology in this empirical method of using semi-structured questions in a conversation with individual Christian practitioners.

Swinton and Mowat expressed the need “to *complexify* and explore *situations*” (authors’ italics).³³⁹ This makes interpreting situations important, as

the experience of the Church in particular holds interpretive significance for theological development. ... [For] Situations have cultures and histories, they occur within particular contexts which

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Ibid., 30.

³³⁶ Ibid., 30-31.

³³⁷ Ibid., 35.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, 13.

often have their own traditions and expectations and they contain specific forms of practice that again contain history, tradition, theology and social experiences and expectations. ... A key aspect of practical theological task is to evoke such ‘unnatural self-reflection’ and to raise people’s consciousness to previously hidden dimensions of everyday situations³⁴⁰

With my personal understanding of the situations and language of the volunteers, from my past and current involvement, I may be able to evoke such “unnatural self-reflection” and expose a “theory-laden” practice or performance of Gospel imperatives, such as “prayer, hospitality and friendship [which] contain their own particular theological histories”.³⁴¹ Here Swinton and Mowat are referring to Don Browning.³⁴² Browning assumes such processes do not surface until a crisis exposes them, whereas Swinton and Mowat’s complexification brings the study of theology to the fore without the need for a crisis.³⁴³ Swinton and Mowat refer to Gadamer, building on the idea that one cannot but be tied to one’s personal pre-understandings and prejudices (the limits of such understanding making up the horizon).³⁴⁴ Nevertheless, these make up the researcher’s ability to view what a participant may be presenting in terms of common experience (the fusing of horizons) which extends the researcher’s understanding and may challenge their prejudices as the limited horizon of the researcher engages with the different horizon of the participant, thus complexifying comprehension.³⁴⁵ This way, conversational dialogue

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 15-16.

³⁴¹ Ibid., 19.

³⁴² Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (USA: Fortress Press, 1991), 6, though Swinton and Mowat have a different reference date in their text.

³⁴³ Ibid. and Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, 19.

³⁴⁴ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, 110-111.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 111-115.

rooted in a common understanding between the researcher and the participant should extend the understanding of the researcher.³⁴⁶ Swinton and Mowat base such knowledge as “ideographic” (sic) rather than the more scientific “nomothetic” knowledge, in which idiographic knowledge is fed by a particular experience and processed by the individual, to be interpreted “from the perspective of their own narrative.”³⁴⁷ The narrative need not be a complete story, so this is not an appeal for narrative research, but may be embedded in how ideas are expressed, or facts brought to mind – perhaps the true narrative of the individual may be locked in the pre-verbal subconscious. Questioning from this perspective offers a less invitation to co-construction, or intimidation, than a professional asking questions about “theology” of a committed volunteer who may, in terms of presenting practice, be more concerned for the welfare of their clients than the ideals of theology. Swinton and Mowat’s complexification promises to reveal the hidden theology which may be present, but perhaps buried deeper than an immediate response to a technical question or the parroting of the local church doctrine.

I will need to remain committed to pursuing only issues raised by the participants, though even then, my choice of which issues to pursue and which to not, may affect how each participant responds. Co-construction might remain even if the participants are pursuing their own theologies. However, in my defence, some insight into an approach where snippets of narrative are captured may date back to my own training and accreditation as a counsellor, practised

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 113-115. See also this thesis 77-78 for more on Gadamer’s horizons.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 43.

some years back.³⁴⁸ In that practice, I became proficient in confirming or otherwise my own understanding by reflecting back to clients what I had understood them to have said with unconditional positive regard. Riessman asserted that such reflecting back to the participant would not result in a re-framing of their statement, but was part of natural speech, which would affirm the narrator, ensure that the statements had been understood properly, and strengthen coherence, thus strengthening interpretation.³⁴⁹ Nevertheless, an element of co-construction cannot be ruled out.

3.1.3 Ordinary theology in practice

Jeff Astley's ordinary theology was discussed in the previous chapter.³⁵⁰ Here, I show how specific aspects of ordinary theology to date will have a particular effect upon my methodology beyond its general use in framing the study. For the individual practice of faith, Astley hopes that by such recognition of ordinary theology based upon experience,

The learner is encouraged to notice things she would normally not notice, and to see things that she does see differently or, as we might say, 'properly'.³⁵¹

In that way, I would venture that experiences such as volunteering are seen by Astley as good, where an ordinary theology of the experience is developed as "ways of seeing."³⁵² Ward also expresses "absorbing" and "noticing" as ways

³⁴⁸ I gained a "Certificate of Accreditation: B100663 at General level to a setting of Pastoral and Community" issued September 1996 with "The Association of Christian Counsellors".

³⁴⁹ Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences* (United States of America: Sage Publications Inc., 2008), 67.

³⁵⁰ 64-69 and 76-77.

³⁵¹ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 84.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 86.

of understanding what it is that we absorb from our Christian communities and thus notice how we pray and operate as Christians as foundational to practical theology, as much as it is to the life of the Christian.³⁵³

That volunteering, or at least personal experience in engaging with the wider community, is more implied or assumed by Astley than stated, is a matter, perhaps, of “*habitus* of the soul” (Astley’s italics).³⁵⁴ Here again “*habitus*” is used in relation to such practical theology, as noted by Ward in the previous paragraph. Here Astley quotes David Martin speaking of a

Series of interlocking attitudes about fairness, about the sources of contemporary social difficulties, the choice of superhuman culture heroes, the selection of significant metaphor, and notions about how and why people act.³⁵⁵

Provided the church interacts with the active ordinary Christian, it may be able to provide appropriate attitudes to teaching and worship which build upon the action of the volunteer, to spur them to further comprehension of faith and action. As Astley states:

We need, rather, *to begin with the working*: to look and see what works in practice, and then to reflect theologically on that.³⁵⁶
[Astley’s italics.]

Similarly Astley offers meaning to the variety of cultural ways that may affect the ordinary Christian, as set out in part 2.5.2 of the previous chapter.³⁵⁷ The embedded and communal aspects of practical theology are thus part of Astley’s

³⁵³ Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology*, 16-18.

³⁵⁴ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 54.

³⁵⁵ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 70-71, reference given as David Martin, *The Religious and the Secular*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 108-109.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 73.

³⁵⁷ 64-69.

approach. Though Astley, through his consideration of cultural and church influences, explains that all learning begins with the experience of an individual, and their responses to it.³⁵⁸ Astley suggests that the starting point for any further progress is with the study of practice, and then theology follows.³⁵⁹

I have considered Christie as a researcher who used Astley's ordinary theology (sometimes writing with Astley) in the previous chapter. In terms of derived methodological approaches there are some differences I will make. Firstly, Christie considers the value of "performance", but in terms of religious language, where "performance" is worship which includes hymns or creedal statements, as opposed to simple statements of emotion, but not active service.³⁶⁰ Such "performance" results in non-cognitive statements of faith, but I would argue, what of performed acts of service, such as those acts performed by Christians engaged with voluntary work? In the case of a Christian volunteer, those doctrines and beliefs marshalled to support their intentions were not only theory laden, but practice laden and useful. This point was not observed by Christie, leading her to only observe the ordinary theology resulting from worship and purely "performative statements", not acts.

Christie acknowledges the possible flaws and scope for further research in her above findings and analysis due to her prior reliance on testing against expected doctrinal understanding, accepting that

³⁵⁸ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 18-20.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Ann Christie, *Ordinary Christology: Who Do You Say I Am? Answers From The Pews* (Great Britain: Ashgate, 2012), 174-175.

An over-emphasis on orthodoxy can lead to the perception that what is important in Christianity is right belief... what matters most is not right doctrine but letting Jesus' story have its way with us.³⁶¹

She further discusses whether ordinary theology is about right practice or right doctrine and notes that right practice, as shown in the Bible, preceded right doctrine. I would argue that where one found right practice, it is likely that right doctrine does exist, but its expression may not be at the forefront of the practitioner's mind. For example, Christie self-consciously recalled an incidence of "Anecdotal evidence" suggesting that "Jesus as Exemplar" is inappropriate for an orthodox Christian belief.³⁶² Nevertheless she concludes that such belief may have resulted from a complex and comprehensive biblical interpretation which also requires that, "attention must be paid to people's practices".³⁶³ Christie acknowledges that, "Clearly doctrine is not everything and it cannot say all there is to say about Jesus"³⁶⁴.

Christie and Astley ponder whether everyone needs to engage in "academic, systematic theology."³⁶⁵ However, they seize upon a thought provoking and witty comment from a teenager about the Old and New Testament, "*perhaps God calmed down when he had a son*" (their italics), without showing any evidence of pressing for further explanation, though they realise that more could be contained in such parental metaphors.³⁶⁶ Further questioning may have

³⁶¹ Christie, "Who do You Say", 193.

³⁶² Ann Christie, "Jesus as Exemplar" in, *Exploring Ordinary Theology: Everyday Christian Believing and the Church*, editors Jeff Astley and Leslie Francis (Great Britain: Ashgate, 2013), 77-85.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 77-78 and 84.

³⁶⁴ Christie, *Ordinary Christology: Who*, 6.

³⁶⁵ Jeff Astley and Ann Christie, *Taking Ordinary Theology Seriously, Grove Pastoral Series P110*. (Cambridge: Grove Books Limited, 2007), 24-26.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

produced a richer response about the state of humanity and the pattern of God. I will therefore build upon Christie's approach by being sensitive to how questions are phrased, and, in order to test beyond a throw-away comment, will probe further should there be a further explanation awaiting an expected response or prompt. I will also ask questions that require analytical responses that may not be used in daily conversation and so produce such "disjunctions" between an interviewer's understanding and that of their interlocutor.³⁶⁷

Christie appears to approach her participants with the expectation that they had not thought about the subject before; as she speaks of "asking people about a subject for the first time".³⁶⁸ I will simply and carefully ask participants if I have fully understood any subject that they raise, and if they may have more to share.

Christie held one-to-one interviews of between 60-90 minutes as extended conversations.³⁶⁹ More telling in terms of methodological issues though, was that although members of four congregations are interviewed, three are from within one benefice, and so under one leading minister (her husband), and the fourth congregation is from a parish in the same Deanery.³⁷⁰ She states that she is the "vicar's wife", but considered interview bias resulting from this to be unlikely.³⁷¹ I will, however, avoid both clergy and their spouses, in order to avoid theology arising from clergy training, or the defence of a clerical account from their spouse. Christie, as a local clergy spouse, was neither a participant

³⁶⁷ Christie, *Ordinary Christology: Who*, 26-31.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Astley and Christie, *Taking Ordinary Theology Seriously*, 8.

³⁷⁰ Christie, *Ordinary Christology: Who*, 17.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

observer, nor entirely independent. However Christie is open about these possible shortcomings. I will therefore ensure samples are taken from across a spread of churches, in order to avoid local or a specific church bias. Further, as I am not the local parish minister of any of the participants, I will have no hope or expectation that they will hold a specific theological approach or tradition, though I too must accept that I will be known as a cleric who is a researcher, and therefore may be providing an unhelpful model before whom the participants may wish to respond as if to their own clergy. My aim will be to put the participants at ease and approach the research questions as someone who understands the language of the volunteer, rather than a cleric testing for “right answers”.

Andrew Village’s approach was a more quantitative study using questionnaires, complete with a single Bible passage to congregants of the CofE, after an initial set of one-to-one interviews with church members.³⁷² He pursued this in a study of “Anglican churches in England”, of various traditions.³⁷³ He used questionnaires with a Bible passage attached, with an initial pilot of one-to-one interviews.³⁷⁴ His results are largely drawn from analysis of these questionnaires, with an impressive 404 respondents.³⁷⁵ One weakness of this approach is that this one passage was imposed on the respondents. Though it offers consistency in interpretation from the point of view of one short (15 verse) passage, no certainty can be offered as to the relevance of this passage to

³⁷² Andrew Village, *The Bible and Lay people: An Empirical Approach to Ordinary Hermeneutics* (Great Britain: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), 7-17.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 11-14.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 15-17.

the actively Christian lives of the respondents. If the passage has no direct relevance, why should they think about it, or consider its theological content?³⁷⁶ The task may only be seen as a test. Village did consider horizon separation, applicability and horizon preference as aspects of the text's relevance to the reader.³⁷⁷ However, Village asks the reader of his passage to make their assessment of its usefulness to their lives.³⁷⁸ This could well be interpreted by the participants as an intellectual exercise. I propose therefore to ask for the biblical themes that participants found helpful, and ask why, or otherwise probe for a deeper response.³⁷⁹ Of course, I will be choosing which aspect to challenge, so introducing the possibility of bias, and I will need to remain aware of this. A qualitative study based on a questionnaire offers no opportunity for the respondents to be pressed or challenged for their personal explanation of any responses. Furthermore, respondents may understand the questions as communicating a different message than that intended by the researcher, there are limited ways of checking this. I will be asking semi-structured questions, enabling me to explore with the participants what they understand and gently encourage them to provide their understanding of the faith or theology which underpins their practices.

3.2 Hearing the volunteer

In this section I explain how the theology of the volunteer may be listened for, using the methodological practices of theology in four voices, and of insider-outsider perspectives.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 13, Mark 9v14-29 given.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 81-82.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 83-89.

³⁷⁹ See Appendices 4 and 11.

3.2.1 *The volunteers' voices*

Helen Cameron et al, proposed a “Theology in Four Voices”, originally as an action research tool, though action research was not chosen as my approach.³⁸⁰ Cameron noted that action research requires the involved collaboration of participants, usually in solving a problem, raising expectations to create change and further reflection.³⁸¹ Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury also describe action research as suitable for workplace involvement requiring democratic involvement for collective problem solving.³⁸² They also suggest awareness of power dynamics, producing a powerful “Experiential knowing”, yet with “Insider/outsider” issues (see also pages 74-76 above).³⁸³ The volunteers I will interview are yet to express their needs appropriately, and may even have seen such involvement in the research process as taking even more precious time away from their commitment to their clients.

The principle of Cameron’s four voices though is a very helpful tool to help discern the complexities of theologies involved at the levels within the action of the volunteers. These “voices” and the accompanying theologies will provide a way to situate the approach of volunteers as active Christians, as distinct from their received understanding of faith and the origin of such faith (part of the theologies of church and culture from which we start), as already discussed.³⁸⁴

The work of each volunteer might be termed “operant theology: the theology

³⁸⁰ Helen Cameron, et al., *Talking about God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology*. (Chippenham Wiltshire: SCM Press, 2010), 54, Figure 4.2.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

³⁸² Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury, Editors, *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice, Second Edition* (Great Britain: Sage Publications, 2008), 65 and 82-83.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 182 and 366-378.

³⁸⁴ 91-94.

embedded within *the actual practices*” (her italics).³⁸⁵ What I should discover is within Cameron’s terminology, “espoused theology: the theology embedded within *a group’s articulation of its beliefs of a group*” (her italics).³⁸⁶ The discussion with these volunteers will be centred on their perception of what aspects of faith are foundational to their actions, or result from questions coming directly out of their work.

Cameron proposed three further voices, which may have initially informed the participants’ theologies. These were: “operant” theology - that embedded within their voluntary practices, “normative” theology - the scriptures, creeds, liturgies and church teaching and “formal” theology - the theology of theologians and that in dialogue with other disciplines.³⁸⁷ The normative and formal voices will be present, probably dating to before their practice, and rehearsed during their regular worship. The operant voice will be contained within their voluntary practice, and practices elsewhere. None of these voices will be pursued, for it is the theology espoused that I am pursuing. This is all part of the “starting in the middle” as previously discussed. However, this study aims to make a contribution to both church practice and the academy, so will at best contribute towards both normative and formal theologies. With Astley’s principle of academic theology springing from experience, I intend to find the growth or otherwise of the espoused theology which the volunteers access, and express out of their active experience of volunteering as an intentional Christian presence. I

³⁸⁵ Cameron, *Talking about God*, 54.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

will now consider a research model which may provide an appropriate approach to bring meaning out of such a dialogue.

3.2.2 *Conversation within semi-structured questions*

Forms of summarised narrative will be encountered during data gathering, and pursued during the analysis. Some insight into an approach where snippets of narrative will be captured may date back to my own past training and accreditation as a counsellor.³⁸⁸ In that practice, I became proficient in confirming or otherwise my own understanding of others by reflecting back to clients what I had understood them to have said. Linking action with the spoken word, Jerome Bruner's work on psychology and cognitive study affirms such an approach.³⁸⁹ Bruner understands the complexities of doing and saying, asking why there were "so few studies" on understanding "how does what one *does* reveal what one thinks or feels or believes?" (His italics.)³⁹⁰ To ask in the context of the action of the volunteer is to lead to a true explanation of the act. Such further reflection and questioning will complexify the process, and so may expose the complexity of thinking that the volunteers do, rather than simply hear what may initially be said. For Bruner an initial response will only produce a conditioned reply in the hope of acceptance, rather than reveal the deeper thoughts that go into reaching a conclusion.³⁹¹ Bruner suggests that to interpret further is not co-constructivism, but a necessary interpretation.

³⁸⁸ I gained a "Certificate of Accreditation: B100663 at General level to a setting of Pastoral and Community" issued September 1996 with "The Association of Christian Counsellors".

³⁸⁹ Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning* (United States of America: Harvard University Press, 1990).

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁹¹ *Ibid* 17-19.

Riessman also asserts that such reflecting back to the participant will not result in a re-framing of their statement,³⁹² proposing that such reflection is part of natural speech, which affirms the narrator, ensuring that the statements are understood properly, and so strengthening coherence, thus strengthening interpretation.³⁹³ Here, the volunteers will be invited to convey their replies to questions in ways that will explain their understanding of faith. Technical language will not be expected (they will be ordinary believers), but some form of storied explanation, however fragmented, will be the most likely outcome.³⁹⁴ Riessman suggests that the conversational approach will encourage participants to summarise their own views in order that the narrative of their work may be grasped, as we are all eager to make sense of our experiences.³⁹⁵ As a researcher with experience in the volunteers' vocation, I will be ripe for sharing the process of exposing this narrative, which will affirm each volunteer's identity.³⁹⁶ However, with time constraints, I may be tempted to keep participants "on task" at times, with the possible loss of a "thick description" with all its complexities. Infinite descriptions will not be possible, and each individual will know this, so they will be willing to summarise their thoughts, or correct or affirm my summary in conversation.³⁹⁷ Faith narratives will be pursued, in an attempt to fix a common point of reflection or understanding at that time. Though forms of explanation may be few in words, there will also be conveyed a richer pattern of meaning, conveyed in "pitch, pauses, and other

³⁹² Riessman, *Narrative Methods*, 67.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁴ 83-91.

³⁹⁵ Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Analysis: Qualitative Research Methods Volume 30* (USA: Sage Publications, 1993), 1.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2-4.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

features that punctuate speech that allow interpreters to hear groups of lines together.”³⁹⁸

In terms of complexifying the initial statements, Anna De Fina and Alexandra Georgakopoulou consider models of analysis based on William Labov. Here phrases which “give the gist of a story” from the “Abstract” of a “story” (or, more usually in these instances, snippet of a story or stories) which progress through “Orientation,” and a “Complicating action,” towards “Resolution”, which, with an accompanying “Coda”, should bring “Evaluation” to provide their point of view.³⁹⁹ In terms of narrative, De Fina and Georgakopoulou note “that narrative is a mode of thought, communication and apprehension of reality.”⁴⁰⁰ Further, “in order to develop a moral sense, individuals need to understand and experience their lives narratively.”⁴⁰¹ Such narrative, they assert, is not without the influence of power structures or meta-narratives, with which individuals are involved (or, in this case church and culture as noted earlier), so a form of narrative will be expected from the individual, maybe in concert with others, in their struggles with “power, credibility and authority ... perpetration or creation of social inequalities.”⁴⁰² This will be the appropriate stand from which I will interpret faith in terms of the individual Christian volunteer who is situated in the church and in the world beyond. Such

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 19.

³⁹⁹ Anna De Fina and Alexandra Georgakopoulou, *Analyzing Narrative: Discourses and Sociolinguistic Perspectives* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 28-29.

⁴⁰⁰ De Fina, *Analyzing Narrative*, 15.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 138.

⁴⁰² De Fina, *Analyzing Narrative*, 125.

narratives are produced in short snippets of sentences or words. Such a process will provide information for *Chapter 4*, to be explained in *Chapter 5*.

3.3 The Practice of the interview and its analysis

Having discussed the theory behind a conversational approach to interviewing, the practice of such an interview will now be discussed. For some form of common approach to each participant to take place, a pro-forma of semi-structured questions was devised, whilst in practice, the participant was permitted to respond how they wished. This way the semi-structured pro-forma used by me as research interviewer was used more as an aid-memoir to return to in order to ensure that the interview had enabled the respondent to offer their views on the subjects helpful to the research question, including whatever the participant wished to share.

3.3.1 Semi-structured interviewing

The qualitative act of simply asking Christian volunteers to share their responses to questions of faith in response to semi-structured questions is, according to Louis Cohen et al, ideal.⁴⁰³ Semi-structured questions will enable such perceptions and feelings to materialise as the participants may raise their own issues, whilst the interviewer will be free to pursue in more detail what the practitioner may bring to the interview. David Silverman provides practical guidelines on how this may be addressed through conversational/narrative analysis.⁴⁰⁴ Silverman expects such interviewing not only to produce facts, but

⁴⁰³ Cohen, Manion and Morrison, *Research Methods*, 235-236.

⁴⁰⁴ David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data, 4th Edition* (Great Britain: Sage Publications Ltd., 2011), 409-426.

also beliefs, feelings and motives about such facts, and the reasons and behaviours relating to their actions.⁴⁰⁵

Research will be conducted using semi-structured questions, in one-to-one interviews with volunteers. This will offer sufficient fluidity to allow participants to make their own interpretations of key faith or theological words that may be used. Questions will be approached in terms of “faith” rather than “theology” in order to help the individual participant to reply confidently from their experiences, free from any expectation of a technical or theological answer.

A further technique employed will be to start each set of semi-structured questions with a simple set of structured demographic questions, an approach used by Diana Conco.⁴⁰⁶ Conco suggests that this has the dual benefits of securing demographic information, whilst presenting questions to the respondents which were relatively straightforward, and so ease the interviewee into stating their belief system.⁴⁰⁷ Subsequently semi-structured questions will be asked within the framework that the participants will have generated.⁴⁰⁸

Demographic questions will be designed to reflect data which may be readily matched with general research on volunteers and their churches from the material mentioned in the literature review of *Chapter 2*. For this a sheet with tick-boxes will be sufficient to record such data, quickly and easily.⁴⁰⁹ The link

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 170-1.

⁴⁰⁶ Diana Conco, “Christian Patients’ Views of Spiritual Care,” *Western Journal of Nursing Research* 17 (1995): 266-276, 268.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ See Appendices 4 and 1.

to the ensuing semi-structured questions, following demographic questions will be: “Explain in a few words...”⁴¹⁰

Six headline questions were decided upon as being manageable. This will provide some structure to aid analysis, using an approach developed by Max Van Manen.⁴¹¹ I will not be subscribing to his phenomenological technique, as it would involve engaging directly with the volunteers in their places of work, so risking co-construction in a re-interpretation at a second telling, and adding too much complexity in a project of only one researcher. However, I will use Van Manen’s method of providing optional questions to fall back on for each headline question.⁴¹² In this way, should the question have been misunderstood, insufficient detail given, or replies be unfocussed, I will be able to explore experiences and develop conversation about their meaning,⁴¹³ Questions are designed to encourage volunteers to consider in what way, and how, their faith has been affected by their volunteering.⁴¹⁴ This method accepts that each individual might respond in very different ways to the others. Faith is very personal. Any aspects that do not naturally flow from the interview as set can be returned to at a later point. Throughout, the researcher’s familiarity with the questions will therefore be essential. It is expected that this process will take

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Max van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (United States of America: State University of New York Press, 1990), especially 66-68.

⁴¹² Ibid., especially 53-76.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, 17, and see this thesis Appendix 3.

about an hour for each interview, but may take longer.⁴¹⁵ The Questions prepared are shown in Appendix 4.

3.3.2 Coding

I do not expect each volunteer to use exactly the same words for the same meaning, so some form of Cohen's "stimulus equivalence" will enable faith words to be identified.⁴¹⁶ The main work of interpretation is to find common themes amongst the many responses. Previous research into Christian volunteers, and even the theology of ordinary Christians using Astley's ordinary theology did not produce a specifically developed theology. My approach is to ask the Christian volunteers what aspects of their faith has developed, or raised issues as a result of their volunteering. The intention is to look for theological interest in the initial cohort of about seven volunteers. Where a common pattern of theological responses became apparent, then a following cohort of volunteers would be interviewed in light of these patterns, and the original cohort similarly re-interviewed in order to confirm or otherwise the theological interests and trends. Initially, I had one question devoted to this issue, with follow up questions where theologically related faith issues could be questioned, ranging from the place of God in their life, to their experience of love for others.⁴¹⁷ This way, I could pursue questions which related to aspects of their faith, and how such faith may have been challenged or changed due to their voluntary work. Any pattern that emerged could be noted and thus used as a basis for enquiry beyond this initial cohort, though for uniformity of results, the original cohort

⁴¹⁵ Appendix 6.

⁴¹⁶ Cohen, Manion and Morrison, *Research Methods*, 412.

⁴¹⁷ Appendices 4.1 and 4.2.

would be re-interviewed in light of any such pattern. Examples of this coding are shown in Appendix 10.

During the first seven interviews, salient comments will be listed on one A3 sheet, one column per participant. Listed in each column will be any particularly strongly held views of their work and aspects of faith, positive or negative, referenced to a line number. The 'Find' function in Microsoft Word should enable the location of faith references in each transcription, or abstract phrases that the interviewee may use to identify that aspect of faith noted in the previous paragraph. Using this A3 paper should enabled common phrases to be readily seen on one sheet. Phrases which speak of faith growth or faith being challenged or changed can then be readily compared. The original text may be revisited where there is any similarity across individuals, even if expressed differently. The context or general language used by one individual may in fact refer to a subject that is given a different name by another individual, much the same way that a thesaurus might suggest several related words to a common meaning. If on first reading a comment is not clear to me as researcher, I will record what the words are and look for other similar comments, so that I may grasp an aspect of faith which, due to my previous experience or prejudice, I may have been unable to appreciate. The resulting words I use to group similar meanings together are summarised as "salient words" in Appendix 9. These espoused faith words will readily become the coding on which the theological work of the volunteer will be based. More formal theology, such as "God in Trinity", or "creation", will be included in the coding. Other practical words connected to church attendance, such as "financial giving" and "churchgoing" will also be noted as relevant to the commitment of the volunteers.

In terms of words used by the cohort, I will not expect them to use theological words directly, as previously discussed. “Faith” is a much more accessible term than “theology” to the ordinary Christian believer. Words like “grace” or “healing” may not actually be used directly by the participant, but the volunteer may consider that despite everything to the contrary, something good came out of someone’s life, or the acknowledgement that someone’s life improved, and it was something to do with God or their faith would readily indicate “grace” or “healing” respectively. Such an open way of coding the theology of grace, or healing etcetera, should also permit access to such concepts throughout an interview and not simply when raised by the researcher, thus reducing researcher bias or co-construction. All these will become fundamental words from which to code responses. After the initial interviews are completed, this approach and coding will be extended to include all the results.

3.3.3 Data collection, recording and transcription

Data collection will be done by audio recording, carried out at a venue chosen by the interviewee at either their home, their workplace (after permission to use a room is given) or a neutral venue such as the private room of a church which they do not attend. It is important that the participants will be interviewed away from the place of their regular Sunday worship. This neutral environment will be required in order to encourage personal reflection, rather than answers expected by their church leaders or fellow congregants. The problem of the local church leader’s theology not matching the theology of their congregation was discussed in the previous chapter.⁴¹⁸ Each interview will be negotiated by

⁴¹⁸ 44-48.

email in the first instance in order to agree a place and time to meet. Once at the venue at the agreed date and time, seating will be arranged or chosen to allow good visible communication without being confrontational. The usual social courtesy of general conversation and drinks will be accepted as part of establishing cultural aspects of mutual acceptance. The process of interview and subsequent transcription, analysis and synthesis into a dissertation will be explained. The ethical permission sheets will be sent beforehand by email, and also presented in paper form and read out and explained before the participant is invited to sign in duplicate for researcher and interviewee to retain. A brief note of the setting and conversation will be recorded in the field notes, and recording will begin after this permission. An option to video record participants will be included, but if not taken up by the majority, any recording will be deleted.

All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed afterwards. The first interviews will be transcribed by myself, and though time consuming, it should offer a deeper insight into the issues presented, and the many non-verbal cues that often give some suggestion as to the emotional strength of feelings. To aid analysis, Silverman's simplified transcription symbols will be used (see Appendix 7), adding symbols for faster and slower delivery, emphasis of words, time to reply and sharp inhalation or exhalation.⁴¹⁹ Transcription guidance from Silverman will be followed, with further suggestions from Cohen et al, so that all aspects (consciously or sub-consciously displayed) might be regarded during their interview and noted.⁴²⁰ The transcription produced will be densely packed on the page to provide the least number of viewings to allow trends and

⁴¹⁹ Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, 465-6.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, 161-206, and Cohen, *Research Methods*, 236-241 and 426-7.

related comments to be seen. The disadvantage of such transcription will be that it is time consuming, and may lead to a backlog of transcriptions to be completed, with a long time between interview and transcription. Such a time lag is to be avoided so that the interview remains fresh in the memory whilst transcribing. In cases where direct answers are given to the initial demographic questions, such attentive transcription may be relaxed, but some respondents may give more than direct factual responses which may have further meaning, in which case accurate transcription will be needed. Audio cues recorded and filed notes should enable the nuances of the conversations and the impact of the meaning to be readily recalled. Nevertheless a professional transcription service will be employed to transcribe some of the later interviews, once the main issues are established. A professional transcriber though will not have the advantage of recalling body language or transcription notes taken at the time, and so may not give an equivalent attention to detail to that of the self-transcribed recording. In this case, the original audio recording of each transcript will be retained on password protected computer, so that the transcripts may be double checked and analysed for any further clues as to what was being communicated. Such painstaking transcription will enable me to become immersed in the responses and thus, avoid writing what was thought to be said, concentrating rather on what was actually said, and how. This should aid analysis from the start.

Transcripts should be analysed for any aspect of the interview which may have led to leading questions or collusion, as discussed above. For example, one may find a common critique of the church across all volunteers. Bruner explores such conceptions as being a necessary part of sharing within groups; there may be specific prompts which elicit a rehearsed response, or it may be part of the

“folk psychology” of the group.⁴²¹ For example, if much of the common critique of the church emerged from different points in the interview, or directly from the question relating to “barriers to faith,” it will most likely be that this is a genuine concern, rather than a response to a prompt.

3.4 The research sample in practice

For prison/offender work volunteers, the recruitment email (see appendix 2.2) was passed to a major church which, through its ministry to the offender community, sends a monthly email to over 150 of such volunteers across the Diocese. The DCD volunteers group across the Diocese only numbered 11, so may be contacted directly by me with a recruitment email from my college email address. This also offers a wide variety of participants from churches across different traditions and cultural backgrounds (city to village across more than one county).

Contacting the volunteers directly from the list held by DCD was straightforward. However, passing the recruitment email to the major church volunteer effectively made them a gatekeeper. In theory at least 150 volunteers would be contactable and it was hoped to select randomly across several demographics, but few responded even after a second mailing. It transpired that the gatekeeper considered such a request of low importance, so added my recruitment email to the end of their own mail shot, and had not circulated the email to their interns who supported prison ministry. Cohan indicated that using gatekeepers introduced a risk that they may inappropriately guard access to

⁴²¹ Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, 55-65.

participants; this may have been an example of such control.⁴²² The mailing was repeated, and as the interns generally represented the lower age range, their absence was identified, and the recruitment email was then circulated to them. The resulting participants had a broad age range (24-72 years at first interview) and their occupations ranged from “professional” to “unskilled”.⁴²³ This represented my experience of prison volunteers and avoided representation of those of a similar “life stage” in terms of Fowler.⁴²⁴

There were then twelve individuals from ten churches (becoming eleven churches as one volunteer moved home and church) from a city, towns and rural areas across an area of a Diocese in Southern England. The anonymised church names and places of volunteering are shown in Table 1 (page 113). Six of the seven initially interviewed were interviewed a second time in order to focus on the coded data used in this study. The seventh did not respond to a request for a further interview, but in the first interview he had given considerable time to expand upon his thoughts (9 minutes shy of two hours). An additional five participants were interviewed once, using this renewed focus. This produced 18 one-to-one interviews averaging a little more than one hour each, resulting in 20 hours, 56 minutes and 37 seconds of transcribed material for extensive analysis (See Appendix 4). One further person (H) was interviewed, but it transpired that they were a clergy spouse, thus close to clergy training, additionally, they had just begun their volunteering in a different area to the others (Street Pastor support), therefore this data was ignored for research purposes.

⁴²² Cohen, Manion and Morrison, *Research Methods*, 152 and 168-170.

⁴²³ See Appendix 1.

⁴²⁴ James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith* (USA: Harper SanFrancisco, 1995).

Table 1:

Place of volunteering:

Alison:	Deaf church groups and individuals
Barbara:	Prison groups in HMP Mulberry
Christopher:	Ex-offenders and homeless in “Ashkelon Community Church” centre
Deborah:	Prison groups in HMP Nectarine
Elizabeth:	Deaf individuals, occasional groups
Fiona:	“Intern” to ex-offenders and homeless in “Ashkelon City Church”
George:	AA/NA via HMP Nectarine and some work with ex-offenders and the homeless in “Ashkelon City Church” projects
H:	Street Café (Allied Street Pastors) Tabal
Jennifer:	Prison groups in HMP Mulberry
Ken:	Prison groups in HMP Pear
Linda:	Prison groups in HMP Pear mainly
Mark:	Prison groups in HMP Pear, HMP Nectarine and HMP Tomato
Nigel:	Prison groups in HMP Pear, HMP Nectarine and HMP Vine

Churches attended:

Alison:	Two Town churches, one CofE, other Baptist, in Gath
Barbara:	Town church in Bozra (CofE)
Christopher:	Ashkelon Community Church (Free Evangelical)*
Deborah:	Rural Market Town of Ninevah (CofE)
Elizabeth:	Only occasional to a variety including other Diocese (CofE)
Fiona:	Ashkelon City Church (CofE), but had moved to a Free Evangelical church in another city by the second interview.
George:	Ashkelon City Church (CofE)
H:	Town parish church in Tabal (CofE: clergy spouse).
Jennifer:	Town Baptist church, Village church in Shechem (CofE) & Town church in Perganum (CofE)
Ken:	Church plant in Kedesh (CofE)
Linda:	Church plant in Kedesh (CofE)
Mark:	House church in Kedesh (Non-denominational)**
Nigel:	Town church in Imgur-Enil (CofE)

* Christopher had previously been a member of the CofE, and his church worked alongside CofE and other city centre churches on his project.

** Mark had previously been a member of a CofE church, and willingly worked with lead chaplains who were usually CofE.

“H” is included in this list, but excluded from the common comments on faith. (Was a clergy spouse and volunteered as a Street Pastor only.)

A focus group of five of the participants was formed to confirm or otherwise the findings. A summary of the finding was circulated to them, and discussed in the focus group. If one includes the time and transcripts for the additional Focus Group and H, the total interview time came to 23hours 42 minutes and 15seconds. All the second cohort interviews were transcribed by the transcription service. The transcriptions analysed ran to 8384 lines of the densely packed text by me, and 13591 lines of the less dense transcription service text: about 440 pages for in-depth analysis.

It might be said that the volunteers chosen for interview, though providing a spread of churches, age and volunteer experience, were nevertheless self-selecting, as I accepted all who applied (except the clergy spouse noted in the previous paragraph). Cohen suggested that self-selecting participants in research projects responded in a more extreme way than those of a “more random” selection.⁴²⁵ This may mean that faith issues might be more readily spoken of. Furthermore, the volunteers sought will be experienced in their work, so perhaps have already reflected upon their experiences.

Repetitious stammer, verbal ticks or tags, and note of noticeable breath or longer gaps, and any confirmatory interjections (such as “Mm” or “yes”) will be essential to comprehending the meaning and emotion behind the text, hence the painstaking transcription. In most of the subsequent quotations used in the body of this thesis, the verbatim text is used, but such non-verbal cues have been removed. I intend to use text that can stand alone to express the meaning, unless

⁴²⁵ Cohen, *Research Methods*, 234.

such non-verbal cues are perceived by me to be directly relevant to their communication. Full verbal Examples of the full transcriptions are appended.⁴²⁶

Generally a variety of church memberships ranging from rural village to city centre are shown. Two large churches (Sunday attendance in the hundreds) produced two volunteers each. Two volunteers (Alison and Elizabeth) supported the deaf community via chaplains to the deaf, and ten were volunteers to offender related work – two (Christopher and Fiona) exclusively beyond the prison gate, two (Linda and Nigel) with some work beyond the prison gate, and some within prisons, and the remainder solely within a prison environment.

3.6 Ethics

The whole practice of research should only be done with ethical regard, the primary ethic being, for pastoral care, “do no harm”. The research will neither include participants who are under the age of 18, nor vulnerable adults. The volunteers involved in offender work or support of the deaf will have already proved to be responsible in order to be accepted for their tasks, so participation with this study will also be their own conscious and responsible choice. The research is self-funded and so no obligations or responsibilities, actual or otherwise will be required by any research sponsor. The research was initially conducted under the oversight of the “King’s College Research Ethics Committee (CREC),” and latterly under the oversight of the, “University of Durham’s Department of Theology and Religion Departmental Ethics Committee.”⁴²⁷

⁴²⁶ Appendices 8.1 and 8.2.

⁴²⁷ See Appendix 2.

Within this were the requirements of “voluntary informed consent” and aspects of “privacy” in data management, all outlined in the guidelines use of the Council of the British Educational Research Association (BERA), *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* which states that

Individuals should be treated fairly, sensitively, with dignity, and within an ethic of respect and freedom from prejudice regardless of age, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, nationality, cultural identity, partnership status, faith, disability, political belief or any other significant difference. This ethic of respect should apply to both the researchers themselves and any individuals participating in the research either directly or indirectly.⁴²⁸

These general rules give rise to specific requirements of ethical behaviour, and these underpinned the appended information sheets for participants.⁴²⁹

Therefore, participants will not only be given the appended forms to keep in the written form, but also have the forms they were to sign read out to them, to ensure that they understand the content before signing the documents. In practice, this will also raise issues such as where the participants may feel most comfortable to be interviewed and the safety of its location. The room will need to be enclosed so that the interview will not be overheard. Furthermore, aspects such as how chairs and furniture will be arranged for interview will need prior attention in order that the researcher may not be placed in a superior aspect, such as being seated in a higher chair, or be lit from behind. During each interview care will be given to ensure attentive interactions with the participants, so that the experience is perceived as supportive and constructive. Nevertheless, conflicting comments or statements that I do not expect will be further probed or

⁴²⁸ Council of the British Educational Research Association (BERA), *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research: second revision* (London: BERA, 2011), 5 Paragraph 9.

⁴²⁹ Appendix 2.

challenged. However, this will be with the attitude that my observations may be wrong – it may be an original or simply different thought to my expectation. I will also take care not to pursue comments to the extent that might breach personal defences, as the possibility of discomfort will not be equal to the value for research purposes. At the end of each interview the participant will be asked how they felt. This duty of care will continue with attention to accurate reporting, sensitive to any vulnerability expressed by a participant, either verbally or non-verbally. Should any individuals be identifiable, then their comments or critiques may potentially be perceived as “disloyalty” to the faith community or by the individual. Particular care will be taken to ensure that data is anonymised by using pseudonyms for all proper nouns relevant to individuals, including churches and place. Further to this, not every detail of the interview will be released.

At the end of the individual interviews, a focus group will be called together from the full cohort, in order to test the conclusions of the initial analysis, and to explore if the volunteers wish to make further contributions.⁴³⁰ Cohen suggested that “Focus groups might be useful to triangulate with more traditional forms of interviewing...” and “may be focussed on a particular issue” which fits the two aims. The same passage stated that focus groups require clear planning and focus requiring good facilitation by the researcher. Some revision of group work will be carried out prior to the meeting, as suggested by the work of Catherine Widdicomb, so that the group would be appropriately managed.⁴³¹

⁴³⁰ Cohen, *Research Methods*, 436-437.

⁴³¹ Catherine Widdicomb, *Meetings That Work: A Practical Guide to Teamworking in Groups* (High Wycombe: Lutterworth Press, 2000).

The aim is to provide feedback with regard to my comprehension of the findings and ask if they were recognisable to the group. I also asked if the volunteers wished to pursue any aspects directly. The relevant information sheet and supporting documents are shown in appendices 5.1 and 5.2.⁴³²

⁴³² Appendix 2, however, no participants wanted to pursue the questions further themselves.

4. CHRISTIAN VOLUNTEERS: THEIR FAITH AND VOCATION

Here I present the salient data selected from the semi-structured interviews with ordinary Christians who volunteer in the community beyond their congregations. I begin by introducing the varied individual members of the cohort, with a table listing the variety of churches they attend. Despite this variety, all the volunteers in the cohort shared a common sense of what is important to them in terms of faith. To start with, two aspects prove important: the Bible and their sense of vocation. I therefore record their responses to the influence of the Bible upon their work; followed by how the church, God, culture and a corporate sense of a volunteering community is expressed. After establishing who and why, I record what specific faith words mean to them, quoting at length so that the theology and excitement contained in their responses becomes evident. By way of contrast, I ask about God and the members of the Trinity as well-known but more “normative” faith words, and there is far less excitement about these words.⁴³³ The evidence will be briefly summarised before progressing to the next chapter which analyses the above aspects.

4.1 The Participants

I am grateful for the nineteen one-to-one interviews (18 plus “H” which was not used) lasting about an hour each. The full cohort is made up of thirteen individuals, labelled A-N (omitting “I” to avoid confusion with the

⁴³³ See Cameron’s “Theology in four voices” and explanation noted in the previous chapter 98-100.

“Interviewer” or with “J”, and discounting the individual “H”) and subsequently given a gender specific first name beginning with each alphabet label. Two of the cohort, Alison and Christopher have received some academic training: Alison in her preparation for her licensing as a lay minister, and Christopher as a lay person wishing to know more about biblical studies. This presented the study with two people who had gone beyond the strict label of “ordinary Christian” as Astley would have defined them. However, I continued to include these active church members who were not in the ordained ministry of the church, as discussed in the Methodology Chapter.⁴³⁴

The full cohort ranges from 24 years to 72 years, and occupations range from “professional” to “unskilled”.⁴³⁵ All are Christians and are or have been members of the CofE. I will now introduce these individuals.

Alison:

Alison spent her early childhood in Scotland, before moving to England, with keen memories of her faith from church in Scotland to the present day. Now in her early 70’s, she attends three churches, one Baptist and two CofE, in addition to CofE church services for the deaf and events, so she sometimes attends two services on a Sunday. When questioned about her denomination, like others she states, “I’ve always said Christian; I refuse to - put myself with anything.” However, recent training and licensing as a “Licensed Lay Minister” (some Diocese refer to this as “Reader”) in the CofE, she cannot avoid being labelled

⁴³⁴ 83-85.

⁴³⁵ Appendix 1.

as such.⁴³⁶ Prior to this, Alison was a secretary. She is married with adult children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Though having no hearing impediment herself or within her family, she supports the deaf church chaplaincy with signing and has done for several years to date, attending the deaf church as much as her local churches. She volunteers in support of deaf people beyond the local church. She also assists at church services, supporting various groups at her local churches.

Barbara:

Though originally working in engineering, fostering had absorbed much of the working life of Barbara, her husband and their own four children. Christian faith is her motivation for this work, and she regularly attends her local church.⁴³⁷

Her parents were non-practising Jews, but she explained, “I became a Christian at about eleven, when I went to Pathfinders.”⁴³⁸ Brought up in a working-class area of London, she continues to be involved in church life, supporting Sunday schools and youth groups, where she feels that she relates well to those who are not as middle-class as those attending the parish church.⁴³⁹ After her own children became adult she felt too old for fostering, but considers supporting ex-offenders as a natural way forward.

⁴³⁶ 1A82-87.

⁴³⁷ 1B101-105 and see below 144.

⁴³⁸ 1B66.

⁴³⁹ 1B56-61.

Christopher:

Christopher describes himself as a “Professional charity manager”, though he had been unemployed for approximately two months at the time of the first interview.⁴⁴⁰ In his mid-fifties he recently completed a year’s course at a Bible college by his personal choice, and spoke with some theological confidence. Christopher’s volunteer role is now as a director manager of a homeless charity (ex-offenders are prevalent in the homeless community) though he maintains his “hands-on” interventions with the clients. Christopher is a member of a large Free-Church community, but had been baptised and confirmed into the CofE at school as an 18year old, despite his parents not being believers.⁴⁴¹ He and his local church work closely with a local Anglican church. Christopher had worked professionally in the social care sector, including time in a Christian organisation, but now volunteers, running a homeless project with other Christians.

On talking to Linda, I realised that Christopher is a friend of hers, and that it is likely that it was Linda whom he credited with persuading him to do more volunteering for the homeless.

Deborah:

I had known Deborah for some years when I was a Prison Chaplain after she was recruited as a prison volunteer. Deborah, in her late sixties at first

⁴⁴⁰ 1C6-7.

⁴⁴¹ 1C133.

interview, is married with adult children. During her volunteering she had a dependant father-in-law at home. She is a retired Administrator for a factory and told me that she likes working with men, hence taking to prison volunteering very naturally, and feeling accepted.⁴⁴² She and her husband are committed members of their parish church, attending weekly services and home groups.⁴⁴³ Both had served on the local church Council, and Deborah had been the church Council Secretary. She also contributes to the preparation of worship for two services a month in the local churches ecumenical fellowship, in addition to her worship at the local CofE village church. At first interview, it had been four years since I had worked at the prison, and eleven months since she had volunteered there. Her volunteering had begun after her husband's parents had moved into their home for care and nursing. Her volunteering in the prison stopped shortly after both of her parents-in-law had died. Deborah said that his was in order to put more into her home life and receive from her local church.⁴⁴⁴ By the second interview, Deborah was recovering from a serious illness.

Elizabeth:

Elizabeth fulfils the picture of church involvement described by Grace Davie in a recent conference when she said, that some saw membership of a church as a “professional army which people join voluntarily, sometimes for a short period and sometimes for a longer one,” rather than the post-war experience of church

⁴⁴² 1D542-556.

⁴⁴³ Appendix 1.

⁴⁴⁴ 1D404-424.

membership being a “conscripted of all”⁴⁴⁵. Elizabeth is the only member of the cohort who is not fully engaged with a local church. Her faith journey is complex: after a parental split, at eight years old, her relatives and re-united Buddhist father decided it would be best for her to go to church and be baptised CofE.⁴⁴⁶ Church regained importance for her in her twenties, when she with her now husband met a “vicar, a priest whom we both respected hugely. Understood where we were coming from.”⁴⁴⁷ This is credited by her as the start of her volunteering; it is a Christian commitment. However, this does not bring a return to frequent church attendance for long, and at interview she stated that she was attending a variety of churches on a roughly quarterly basis.⁴⁴⁸

In her late fifties, married with no children or dependants, Elizabeth regularly discusses Christian faith and prayer issues with Christian colleagues and friends; but was critical of the church.⁴⁴⁹ Nevertheless she regularly prays, occasionally reads the Bible, and believes the Christian message to be constructive.⁴⁵⁰ She provides a contrast to the remaining regular church going cohort.

Fiona:

At first interview, Fiona was a “gap year” (pre-university) “intern” to a major city church, volunteering (though she had to pay a fee for the teaching received).

⁴⁴⁵ http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/faith_debates-2012/trends Lancaster University, reporting the “Westminster Faith debate” of 2nd May 2012, accessed 29th June 2013.

⁴⁴⁶ 1E16 and 1E308-318.

⁴⁴⁷ 1E422-423.

⁴⁴⁸ 1E604-608 and 1E867-881.

⁴⁴⁹ See 137.

⁴⁵⁰ 1E351-367.

Single, in her 20s and a recent convert to Anglicanism, having been brought up as a Roman Catholic.

Fiona is enthusiastic about her new view on faith, pointing to the vicar of the city church as her inspiration to becoming an intern.⁴⁵¹ She was encouraged to volunteer for work with the marginalised and “ex-offenders,” including prisoners, by others in that local church. As the internship included teaching about the basics of faith, there is occasional uncertainty as to whether her faith had been changed as a result of the teaching or her volunteering. Nevertheless, volunteering enhances her experience of faith and brings up theological issues for her. Fiona was assigned to “*Support*” a department of her city church, set up to co-ordinate their work to reach the marginalised of the city. As an intern, Fiona attended Sunday worship twice a Sunday, and joined group worship almost daily during the week.⁴⁵² She attended Pastorates (the local, church run, mid-weekly, small groups of congregation members meeting for prayer and fellowship); a Bible study; and helped at conferences, administration, youth and children’s work. Prayer and spiritual warfare are part of her approach to faith.⁴⁵³ By the second interview, Fiona had moved to a large church in London where she continues to volunteer.

George:

George has a “no nonsense” manner. Despite George’s commitment to his local church in the city, he is the only volunteer in the cohort to have come to faith

⁴⁵¹ See 146.

⁴⁵² Appendix 1.

⁴⁵³ 1F296-301, and 1F682-706.

from Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), and its allied group, Narcotics Anonymous (NA). AA/NA remain the highest demand on his time as a volunteer as “the treasurer on one, and the prison secretary in the other” (the prison secretary facilitates groups of members at a local prison).⁴⁵⁴ In his late thirties, George’s church life began when he joined a Charismatic Pentecostal church, having been inspired by a Roman Catholic priest. George was baptised as an adult seven years before the interview, and joined the CofE when he met his now wife five years ago - he hoped to be confirmed CofE later in the year. George felt his Baptism was the start of a new life after a difficult childhood and painful early adult life.⁴⁵⁵ He feels driven to encourage other Christians to social action, but is frustrated by the lack of response.⁴⁵⁶ George is paid as a part-time church Verger, so this gives him time to share the care of their youngest child, (his wife working full time), and to volunteer. Beyond the AA/NA and prison work, George is committed to further volunteering in his local residential community and in his “home” church where he leads a home group.⁴⁵⁷

H:

“H” is not used as an example of volunteering here, as “H” is a clergy spouse and volunteered in support of “Street Pastor” work in a Market Town within their spouse’s parish.

Jennifer:

⁴⁵⁴ G82-87.

⁴⁵⁵ G279-298, and G143-164.

⁴⁵⁶ G251-271.

⁴⁵⁷ G27-28, G1147-1155.

Jennifer is in her mid-sixties, and a retired hairdresser and shop worker, a widow with no children.⁴⁵⁸ She has a Christian faith which dates back to being ten years old and was baptised at nineteen years when she “gave her life to Jesus”.⁴⁵⁹ She retains her support and membership of a Baptist church and preaches and leads worship in her local small Baptist church regularly. However she attends two CofE churches, one in her local village and the other in a nearby town, where she attends groups and assists with voluntary work.⁴⁶⁰ Together with a monthly attendance at the prison she supports, this presents four different places that she attends Sunday worship each month: two CofE, one Baptist, and the prison. It is becoming common for some village churches to only have one service a month. She volunteered for prison work for about three years when young, shortly after her baptism. She returned to support the local prison as a Christian volunteer about four years ago when a prison chaplain recruited prison volunteers by approaching the large town church she attends monthly.

Ken:

Ken speaks freely of his speech impediment. He felt it had not improved until he began volunteering as a Christian in street work including support of the homeless.⁴⁶¹ Though he was baptised at 25 years of age, when he “got blessed with the Holy Spirit” , Ken had then felt held back from contributing to church life because that local church looked down on him.⁴⁶² It was when he changed

⁴⁵⁸ J56-57.

⁴⁵⁹ J66-68.

⁴⁶⁰ J72-84.

⁴⁶¹ K295-301.

⁴⁶² K447 and K253-268.

churches in his forties that Ken began his voluntary work mentioned above, plus preaching and leading worship.⁴⁶³ Now in his early seventies, Ken has retired from a managerial profession, maintaining his attendance at worship more than once a week. He also attends home groups.⁴⁶⁴ With age, Ken felt less able to work on the streets in winter, and recently began volunteering in prisons after contacting PF, he now helps with the “Sycamore Tree” in a local prison.⁴⁶⁵

Linda:

Linda is a confident speaker in her mid-thirties, married with no children or dependants, but aware of the time this gives her for volunteering.⁴⁶⁶ She has a professional job, and has been a Christian for over seventeen years, worshipping weekly, attending local church home groups weekly and other church events from time to time. Additionally she supports PF Sycamore Tree groups on a monthly basis and usually has a Christian book to read for inspiration.⁴⁶⁷ Linda has volunteered in many of the local prisons over the years, though her first Christian voluntary work at university was on mission trips.⁴⁶⁸ She began street mission work in those years too, supporting beggars of the city, many of whom were homeless and included ex-offenders. Linda is committed to this work, attending training events for volunteers within the city, and travelling to other cities for courses. Her professional work is allied to some of these areas of

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ Appendix 1.

⁴⁶⁵ K157-158.

⁴⁶⁶ L617-636.

⁴⁶⁷ Appendix 1, and L128-145 and L234-248.

⁴⁶⁸ L234-248.

social concern. She mentions Christopher's work several times, and her work with Tina (the gatekeeper for prison work), counting them both as friends.⁴⁶⁹

Mark:

Mark puts his age in the range 51-60years, he retired four and a half years ago from a "higher managerial professional" post.⁴⁷⁰ His churchgoing went back to singing in the choir as a boy, but he said that his Christian life began in the 1970's.⁴⁷¹ He could not name the group, other than beginning with "Jesus", but "Jesus Freaks" was a particular growing group in the 1960's and 70's.⁴⁷² This began his faith, based on "God is love."⁴⁷³ Mark often quotes scripture. About twenty years prior to interview, he moved from a CofE church to a "non-denominational house-church" with a small but committed number of Christians, one of whom worked in a local prison. On the death (he thinks) of the Chaplain there, the house-church were encouraged to go en masse to assist with worship and pastoral care in the local prison. Now, it is only Mark who remains committed to prison work, with the other members of the house-church praying for him and taking an interest in his work.⁴⁷⁴ Mark's commitment includes the arduous task of leading a series of "Sycamore Tree Restorative Justice" courses. This work, though voluntary, requires in depth training over

⁴⁶⁹ L678, 1396, 1428-1437 and L1428-1437, where Linda said, "I tend to keep in touch with, people across the city that are interested in that kind of thing, just because you end up seeing them at all these similar events... Like Tina or Christopher or whoever."

⁴⁷⁰ Appendix 1.

⁴⁷¹ M299-309.

⁴⁷² M726-731.

⁴⁷³ M747-750.

⁴⁷⁴ M1052-1058.

several weeks, and requires him not only to be available for each course, but to mark the work.

Nigel:

Nigel is a retired “Retail Director” in his early seventies, and a confident speaker. He is married with one adult child and no dependants.⁴⁷⁵ As for faith, he says “I’ve had a faith since I was a child but, but became a current, committed Christian about 40 years ago.”⁴⁷⁶ This changed his life, and reading “Upside Down Kingdom” motivates him to do the opposite of the world’s expectation, and to live Matthew 25.⁴⁷⁷

He is committed to the CofE church he joined then, a local church he proudly described as almost as large as Ashkelon City Church some miles away from this large town.⁴⁷⁸ In the past Nigel served on local church councils, led worship and preached as a lay member (unlicensed) of the church, something he no longer does, in favour of his prison volunteering. He helps with Prison Alpha, and tutoring Sycamore Tree courses in several prisons. Nigel remains committed to church related missions and charities, being a trustee of several.⁴⁷⁹ He was the first in his local church to undertake volunteering in prisons, but subsequently more people became volunteers over the ten years or so since he started. The congregation offers prayer and financial support for prison work. This may be due in part to his relationship with his vicar, with reference to his

⁴⁷⁵ Appendix 1.

⁴⁷⁶ N46-47.

⁴⁷⁷ N159-166, Matthew 25 contains being watchful (ten virgins), use of one’s talents, being noted as one of God’s obedient and righteous servants, serving the poor, the stranger, the sick and the prisoner.

⁴⁷⁸ N941-942.

⁴⁷⁹ N121-135.

vicar and their wives, he said: “We go on holiday; you know, we’ve been friends for 30 years really.”⁴⁸⁰

4.1.1 *Participants as a cohort*

Table 2, page 132, shows the participants responses to questions relating to church attendance. Most have attended church since childhood, but only two (Deborah and Fiona) had parents who went to church when they were children. Most are enthusiastic members of their local church now, attending mid-week groups and/or committees, and contribute to the running of their local church by leading home groups, supporting other church initiatives, or serving on church committees.

Within the volunteer cohort in general, there is a sense of a common purpose. This is despite differences in age, sex, churches attended, geography, occupational status, temperament, abilities and two different areas of volunteering (deaf church and ex-offender/prison work). Some are well networked (Nigel, Mark and Linda) and there is some coincidental work at prisons such as HMPs Nectarine and Pear (four of the ten volunteered in each) and two work at HMP Mulberry (see Table 1).⁴⁸¹ Common themes will emerge as the data is presented.

All but Elizabeth could be described as committed Evangelical Christians who attended church (not always itself of evangelical tradition) more than once a week, read their Bible daily, prayed several times a day - at least one time with

⁴⁸⁰ N235-245.

⁴⁸¹ 113.

the Bible and guided notes or a “devotional book” and attended some form of regular fellowship group or groups at least fortnightly.⁴⁸²

Table 2 All: Faith in the Church:

	Negative : Positive
Went to church as a child ¹	CG:ABDEFJMN
Churchgoing parent when child	ABCEGJM:DF
Attend church weekly or more	E:ABCDFGJKLMN
Attend mid-week group or ccty	E:ABCDFGJKLMN**
Contribute to running of local church ³	E:ACDFGJKLMN***
Increased home church going ²	BDE:ACF
Improved relationship with church ²	BD:AC
Increased finances and giving ²	D:FGJ*
Home church as gift or barrier	ABCDEFGKJ:ABCDEFGJKLMN
Feel an outsider to your congregation	ABCDEFGJK:
Relating to other Volunteers	:ABCDEFGJKLMN

Key:

Green: an increase, or positive.

Red: a decrease, or negative.

Black: no change noted, or change cancels each part out.

ABCDEFGJKLMN The initial of the given name of each volunteer interviewed.

¹ “C” Became a Christian “At school” when 17yrs old; “G” went to a church supported youth club.

² Others remained the same.

³ Leader of church group or on church council or both or similar.

* Giving not just to the church.

** J and N had attended mid-week groups in past years, and occasionally.

*** L, M and N Said they had considerable influence with the church leadership, though no specific role is offered. L’s influence is cited by C and K independently, M is in a church which shared leadership, and N had the support of and a close relationship with his church’s leader, and had served on the church council in past years.

A recurring theme is one where each individual is embedded in their local church (with the possible exception of Elizabeth, who connects with a variety of churches). There is an implied interaction between the material from the

⁴⁸² Appendix 1.

volunteers' sending churches and the faith as understood by the volunteer. However, there is an additional theology derived from their work which the volunteers draw upon as they attempt to apply their received faith to their work. So many of the approaches to faith that the volunteers felt they had assimilated, perhaps at church, perhaps through other influences, felt inadequate in this world of volunteering. Volunteering is difficult, time consuming and uncomfortable work, so finding out what encourages them to do it is my next task.

4.2 Why volunteer: Personal Bible reading meets experience

All of the volunteers felt that the Bible is central to their ministry, as evidenced by the frequent quotes and allusions to the Bible, sometimes referenced, sometimes not.⁴⁸³ On average, the word "Bible" is the seventh most used word used in the context of faith, following "church/es", "God", "faith", "prayer", "Christian/ity" and "good".⁴⁸⁴ All but two volunteers (Elizabeth and Mark) read their Bible at least daily, (with those two expressing regret at such neglect in their Bible reading).⁴⁸⁵ This dependence on the Bible appears to underpin their ministry: the Bible stands wherever and whenever you read it. The Bible is not universally cited as the motivation behind the volunteering, nevertheless, evidence suggests that the Bible may have been an inspiration behind the motivations given. For example, both Linda and Nigel speak of Christian books as the main motivation for their volunteering and missionary zeal. Linda reads about Christian missions in popular books "Like Nicky Cruz or Jackie

⁴⁸³ Appendix 9.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ See Appendix 1, also 134-135 and 141-142.

Pullinger”.⁴⁸⁶ Nigel remembers reading the, “Upside-down Kingdom” when he became a “committed Christian about 40 years ago”, (as a child attending Sunday school) which led him to pursue Matthew 25 seriously.⁴⁸⁷ However these books are “Christian” which presupposes that they are steeped in biblical quotes or allusions. Elizabeth speaks of the inspiration of a vicar (whom one might reasonably assume used the Bible), whilst she also refers to Bible commentaries as an inspiration.⁴⁸⁸

Elizabeth provides a succinct account of the motivation involved in volunteering,

the motivation’s very closely linked with how it changes me, because one’s motivated to be, a servant of God, and to be a means by which, the God of love that I believe in can be, can be shared out in daily things. Whether that is, you know, through action, through listening for me, through communication. Because if. Because it seems effective and I feel personally rewarded, I gain so much from what I do, that re-motivates, it makes me think, “Yes this faith is absolutely where it’s at, it’s strong, it works.” Jolly tough, but, you know, it does work, it is, it is all powerful. So it’s a very positive circle, I suppose for me. Motivated to trying to do things, but I think it becomes faith. I mean, I probably, I’m sure I should, study more. But when I do - think about, how Jesus behaved with other people, or the many levels, layers of meaning in the parables. [Sigh] You have an opportunity through volunteering to try and put some of those things into action.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁶ L239.

⁴⁸⁷ N46-53.

⁴⁸⁸ See 123-124. Also Elizabeth quotes William Barkley’s daily reading Bible commentary, and listed a meaningful book for her as, ““Discerning the Bible, a Priest’s experience,” by J K Kadowaki SJ.” 1E280-389.

⁴⁸⁹ 2E293-305.

Elizabeth then recognises that her faith is an important part of her motivation, and similarly to other volunteers, she looks to the Bible to see how “Jesus behaved” and how the parables of Jesus have “layers of meaning” that she might discern through her own action, as noted in the final two sentences of her statement above. Elizabeth’s expressed motivation began, as shown in this quote, from an expectation of change: becoming a better “servant of God”, where God is, “the God of love that I believe in” who is to be “shared out in daily things.” There is room here for these statements to be played out in all of life, not just volunteering. However this is not simple Bible instruction for life, but a meeting of her own experience and feelings; when her work, using her words above, “seems effective”, she feels “personally rewarded”, with positive feedback, or, a “positive circle” reinforced again mid quote as it, “re-motivates, it makes me think.” This is where faith is grown, not just hearing and learning at church; or from a book; or simply living life; but motivation by practice, based on the Bible, even if she felt that she may benefit by studying it more. Elizabeth claims that this is, “Jolly tough, but, you know, it does work, it is, it is all powerful.” So self-discipline and fortitude are implied. The quote on motivation ends with, “You have an opportunity through volunteering to try and put some of those things into action.” These themes are repeated almost directly by Fiona, and implied by the other volunteers, as the following explores.⁴⁹⁰

4.2.1 *The biblical imperative*

The way in which the volunteers interpret this imperative is discerned in three ways. Firstly, through the Bible as a direct vehicle for God’s word, perhaps

⁴⁹⁰ 1F346-350, and 150-151.

literally, perhaps not; secondly in the general guidance shown by Jesus to love others, exemplified in the Gospels, and thirdly as a biblical call to evangelism and mission, either directly from “the great commission”, or from a general reading.

Deborah, Fiona and George read the Bible as “the word of God” in the sense that God speaks to them directly through the reading, informing their decision making and conduct, whilst guiding them when they need to share something of God with others. Deborah speaks of a Bible passage, “That was God speaking directly” and later on “the way God could speak to me... I looked for a message, for that day, from it”,⁴⁹¹ where “it” is the Bible. In her second interview Deborah speaks of her dependence upon God as based on a Psalm, “Psalm 91 was true, God was looking after him.”⁴⁹² Indeed, Deborah’s volunteering arises directly from a church Bible study she led, a study which directed all the study members into volunteering.⁴⁹³ For George, there is a repeated motif of “God of the Bible”, for example, “And it wasn’t until I met the God of the Bible, and that sort of thing, did it makes sense to me.”⁴⁹⁴

Such words orientate the volunteers into mission beyond the church congregation with no other apparent intermediary necessary. Each is immersed in a supportive fellowship, in the case of Deborah and Fiona, their local church, and in the case of George, his pre-church time at Narcotics Anonymous.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹¹ 1D305-313, and 1D531-541

⁴⁹² 2D829.

⁴⁹³ 1D147-168.

⁴⁹⁴ G161-165, with “God of the Bible” also found in G451.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

Though the Bible was important to the volunteers, I could find no evidence of biblical fundamentalism. Deborah favours Genesis as “very much a picture painting exercise. I don’t honestly believe in ‘one day’.”⁴⁹⁶ George admitted that he now sees God as the creator, but not limited to the apparent literal account of Genesis.⁴⁹⁷ Perhaps a good summary approximating to this is voiced by Fiona. Here she suggests that God speaks directly out of the biblical text, yet offers a more complex view, which involves personal experience, to provide evidence that the Bible is truly God’s word. This may account for how volunteering in the community, putting words into action, may have provided a positive feedback in terms of faith:

There’s a lot of evidence that points at the Gos (Sic), that the Bible is a reliable source of evidence. But, I don’t see the Bible as an evidence. I see it as a, as God’s word, you know. So, I just go on faith really, on my experiences that I’ve had with God.⁴⁹⁸

Nevertheless, the Bible is frequently referred to by all the volunteers, including Fiona.

A “softer” reading of the Bible, where the Bible is taken as a book containing truths that could be considered in aggregate, rather than any direct quote, is favoured by Barbara, Christopher and Alison. Barbara is the most outspoken:

I// And do you have any biblical underpinning for what you’re doing. Do you do you...?

B// Please don’t quote that verse to me.

I// What verse is that? [She laughs loudly]

⁴⁹⁶ 1D519-520.

⁴⁹⁷ G991-978.

⁴⁹⁸ 1F346-350.

B// The verse I'm not going to say! [Continues to laugh] About visiting prisoners!

I// Oh I see.

B// My biblical underpinning really is just to show the love of Jesus. To anybody.⁴⁹⁹

Barbara is reluctant to use any direct biblical quote, but readily speaks of prayer and other aspects of faith. This may be due to her insecurity at being unable to remember Bible quotes, “‘cause my memory’s terrible for remembering Bible verses,” whereas some of the prisoners she encounters show considerable ability to remember biblical quotations.⁵⁰⁰ Barbara works in a prison with a high number of deportees from Jamaican or African Christian nations who are schooled in remembering Bible verses, as she said,

we’ve got fifty now who come over, to our Pentecostal service. Very African. Very lively faith. Because they are, Jamaican; Nigerian. So they’ve come in from these countries, with, very strong Pentecostal backgrounds, so they, worship with passion. And they know more their Bible than I do. So if you start to say something, they finish it for you.⁵⁰¹

By contrast, Christopher speaks in general terms about the themes of the Bible being paramount; he is willing to offer several examples from memory:

I// So any particular Christian teachings or references that you feel were relevant?

C// Ah! I think that may be come later, but yes, realising the amount of scripture that is about justice and mercy and that kind of thing. Er and clothing people and feeding people. So, James, the bit about

⁴⁹⁹ 1B259-262, presumably referring to Matthew 25 v24-40.

⁵⁰⁰ 2B431-2 and 2B188-220.

⁵⁰¹ 2B185-191.

faith and deeds. er. Mica 6v8 what do you want of er, my mind's gone blank: er. "What do you want of me," er.

I// "But to live humbly, love mercy and,"

C// Yes. That's the one. er, but also just doing searches on words like justice and mercy and realising how often it comes up. An and things like er Nehemiah, where his basic task is to build the wall, but pastoral things happen along the way, and he has to divert to providing for the widows and and and.⁵⁰²

Regardless of their approach, most of the volunteers are keen to "check out" their actions against what the Bible says, and generally often refer to the Bible, hence the need to read the Bible at least daily. Here, "justice" and "mercy" are pursued by Christopher. The volunteers long to develop these concepts of justice and mercy, but they do not speak of their churches offering any insight to help them.⁵⁰³ They can find some ideas to support their work, but only by looking in the Bible themselves, or after seeking "my experiences" as Fiona put it earlier.⁵⁰⁴

Alison is an advocate of the idea commonly attributed to St Francis of Assisi, that we should "Preach the Gospel, and if necessary use words", when she said,

I mean Jesus tells us to go out and make disciples and bring people in. And this is a way of doing it. Of, we don't preach at them, but they can see in our lives that we give. We can talk about why we are as we are: why we have a peace, what God does for us. And it gives us that opportunity, but to do it with our lives, rather than with the words of the Bible and, just by being, people can see.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰² 1C148-157.

⁵⁰³ See 151-159, 165-168 and 211.

⁵⁰⁴ 1F346-350 as noted page, 137.

⁵⁰⁵ 1A223-228.

Many of the actions, or lived experiences of the volunteers, involved talking to others. Like Alison, the most experienced volunteers use less religiously loaded language such as “God”, “Jesus” and “healing” than the less experienced. This is shown in Appendix 9 where such religious words and the frequency of use are listed against volunteers A-N. Alison, Linda, Mark and Nigel are the most experienced volunteers, as each holds some responsibility for other volunteers, such as heading the “Sycamore Tree Course”.⁵⁰⁶ Though Mark uses the words “Grace” and “Faith” more than most volunteers, he otherwise tends to avoid religiously loaded language. This is an approach necessarily held by those who assist in the Prison Service approved “Sycamore Tree Course”, as Linda said,

I guess courses like Sycamore Tree, you’re not meant to talk openly about your faith compared to if you do chapel or alpha, [then] it’s obviously overt.⁵⁰⁷

“Chapel or alpha” refers to events specifically provided for a Christian or Christian enquiry cohort, whereas the “Sycamore Tree Course” is advertised as a restorative justice course open to all. Similarly volunteers to the Chaplaincy for the deaf may work with those referred by local Social Services for welfare reasons. So how do the volunteers view evangelism in the context of working alongside non faith linked organisations and in the light of the Bible?

4.2.2 Evangelism from biblical principles

Some see the Bible as their inspiration to evangelism, and thence to spreading the Gospel of love to communities beyond the church. Fiona felt that she needs

⁵⁰⁶ See Appendix 1 for the demographic, and 17-18 for course details.

⁵⁰⁷ L607-608.

to, “get something of God out there” from scripture.⁵⁰⁸ She also feels that there is something in the scriptures for all humanity to understand, so one has to be able to quote the Bible, in order that it can be shared.⁵⁰⁹ Fiona explained,

it’s wonderful to, be able to give someone a message from God, or to give someone a scripture from God and say, ‘yeah I really feel like God wants to say this to you’, and when you see it touch that person, but if you’re not, if you haven’t really been reading the Bible and spending time with God, well, I noticed a big difference in, in what I can hear God saying to me, and, like yeah, in the way that He communicates with me.⁵¹⁰

Meanwhile, for Ken, there is a mixture of personal direction towards evangelism, and a challenge from scripture to speak to a specific community, “I would probably not make a, a centre of the volunteering so much as, Jesus asked us all to be, witnesses, he asked us to visit in prison.”⁵¹¹ Jennifer’s literal understanding of the Bible similarly leads to evangelism in prison, as, “there’s a very real hell, and I don’t want them to go there.”⁵¹² However, common to most volunteers who build on the love of God, Jennifer immediately modified her sentence with the comment,

I want them to know a different way, and lives can be changed, you know, and we can only do that by, loving them and, going there and showing that you know we’re willing to, give the gospel to them.⁵¹³

For Mark reading the Bible brings you closer to God, and as one becomes closer to God, then one can take others to God, so:

⁵⁰⁸ 2F1042.

⁵⁰⁹ 2F1151-1156.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ K1040-1042.

⁵¹² J625-626.

⁵¹³ J630-632.

it's not the Bible thumping, 'here's a verse repent or' [laughs] 'hell and damnation is coming your way' Billy Graham style but, it's more I think just, just, er, drawing alongside, is that how I would describe it.⁵¹⁴

And further on in the conversation:

M// there's another Scripture I can give you ... and that's from, er also from James, isn't it? That one that says er, the second part of it is, 'draw near to God and He'll draw near to you'; the first part of that of that I think is, 'resist the Devil and He'll flee' or something, but, 'draw near to God and He'll -' so we were talking about evangelism as drawing near. I'd er.

I// That's an evangelism. [From an earlier comment 1007-1039]

M// ... look at that Scripture. I mean I'm just talking about God but I think it, it applies to Christians; I think if a Christian draws near, then God draws near to people.⁵¹⁵

In aggregate, evangelism is a driving force for the volunteers to work and share beyond the church congregation, but there are various nuances where there is both simple witnessing, and a delicate balance between the threat of hell, and the call of love.

Not all volunteers feel able to express their evangelistic calling in their work, especially when offering support to non-Christians or in terms of offering courses advertised for all. Linda particularly notes this difficulty, "I guess courses like Sycamore Tree, you're not meant to talk openly about your faith compared to if you do chapel or alpha, it's obviously overt."⁵¹⁶ Elizabeth

⁵¹⁴ M1016-1019

⁵¹⁵ M1092-1116.

⁵¹⁶ L 607-608.

enjoyed the Christian fellowship of volunteers to the “Samaritans” even though she feels constrained not to evangelise or mention religion in her work there:

So, it gives an opportunity; to put some faith into practice and see what happens. And, it does strengthen it. And it brings one together. There is something very nice about: amongst my fellow Samaritan volunteers, those of us who are Christian: it is nice. We can talk together and share it. You know, most of the time we all know we, go on our shift and we put our personal judgements, values, faiths, politics, everything to one side, and that’s what Cad Varah said, you know.⁵¹⁷

However, the Bible remains a common driving force for all, so how does this journey start?

4.3 Calling and maintaining the call: The church, God and culture

4.3.1 The church calling

When the volunteers are asked about why they did what they did, the reaction of some is to think in terms of individual commitment or family propensity to being socially helpful, but if asked about their current volunteering, all realise that it is their local church which invited them into their voluntary roles.

Alison provides a typical approach to calling saying “I am a person who likes doing. I like to be needed, and used.”⁵¹⁸ However she reveals her early life as one connected to her local church and its ministers, all of whom encouraged service, even from Sunday school when she was under eleven years old:

⁵¹⁷ 2E314-320.

⁵¹⁸ 1A191-192.

It was, “behold I stand at the door and knock and anyone who opens it I will enter in,” that was the verse and the minister, it was a Methodist church.⁵¹⁹

And, “But it was the Church of England minister who helped us find a house when we arrived...” after moving from Scotland when eleven.⁵²⁰ Her call to deaf ministry volunteering had been inspired by seeing signing at “Dales Bible Week”.⁵²¹

Similarly Barbara saw that her previous work fostering was connected to her outreach:

because we’ve always worked, with, always with a heart for the none-churched basically. You know, from all the children bringing their various friends home from the fostering.⁵²²

This is augmented by her being born to a Jewish father, and her statement that she felt, “Chosen and called.”⁵²³ However, she is called to her volunteering: first by a Prison Chaplain asking for volunteers at her church, “We were approached from Mulberry, if we would send a group of volunteers in, to lead a Sunday morning service...”⁵²⁴ And later she refers to both a leaflet “just on the notice board” and a church friend, “I went to a Young Offenders Institute, a friend of mine used to go and help and I realised it was something I would quite like to do...”⁵²⁵

⁵¹⁹ 1A236-255.

⁵²⁰ 1A77, the age she became a Christian, 1A252-254 A Methodist minister who invited her to faith, and 1A 1A271-273, a CofE minister who continued her faith to confirmation, 1A260-262.

⁵²¹ 1A660-680. “Dales Bible Week” is an Evangelical Charismatic meeting held annually.

⁵²² 1B102/103.

⁵²³ 1B160-191.

⁵²⁴ 1B54-56.

⁵²⁵ 1B 131-139.

“So I’ve got a kind of natural interest in er, that kind of thing. Not generated by the church, but was there anyway”⁵²⁶, is how Christopher began his explanation of how volunteering is part of his life. He continued that it was “a reaction against family. So middle class upbringing and then going out and realising that the world was a bit more complicated...”⁵²⁷ However, Christopher went on to use this back-drop to explain why he responded to a call from a member of his local church to support the homeless and ex-offenders, when he playfully said, “Somebody manoeuvred us into the position” in terms of getting him to support the work.⁵²⁸ Whether personal inclination or not, that is how his ministry began: a call from a church member.

Elizabeth has a more complex beginning to faith, with a Buddhist father and lapsed Roman Catholic mother, she became a, “rock solid Christian” at twenty years of age.⁵²⁹ When asked of any non-Christian group involvement, she said, “Well, I’m very heavily involved in Samaritans. [I// Ah right.] and always have been for - well, not always - but for many, many years.” She suggests that this is why she is less involved in a local church. However, when she discussed the start of her work with the Samaritans Elizabeth remembered,

What I do need to say is that vicar came, after I had already joined Samaritans. I joined Samaritans in South Devon, but it was about, six months later, about a year later. It was very early stages, I was a very new Samaritan. So I might have, I may or may not have stayed. He probably. That probably helped cement it, what he did.

⁵²⁶ 1C108-109.

⁵²⁷ 1C111-114.

⁵²⁸ 1C91.

⁵²⁹ 1E13-14.

I'd already joined by then, by the time that occurred. [I// But the Christian framework] E// Yes.⁵³⁰

Fiona suggests that her early upbringing helped her to serve the church, but for the wrong reasons, "I// So were you brought up as a Christian? F// No. er, brought up as a [I// That's interesting.] Yeah, brought up as a Catholic."⁵³¹ And later:

The facts were there, but there was no, er. It was more about doing good things to be good for God, rather than er, God's grace, and er, the Holy Spirit is, here for us too.⁵³²

It was when she joined an Anglican Evangelical church and was invited to live with the vicar and his wife -Brian and Christine:

I guess it just came as, as an idea really, like the work, the internship, I didn't know what it was but it just kept coming up, it kept coming up, and kept coming up. People would, talk about it when I was there. It just kept coming up in church. So I just, one day I was, walking with Brian, and he, and I said "what's the internship? Because I keep hearing it, and people keep talking about it." And then he said, "Oh it's -" He didn't really give me much information, but just said, "Oh why, do you want to do it?" and then I guess he and Christine went on and prayed about it after that. Then they came to me and said, "Err, I-I think. We think God wants you to do to do the internship, you should pray about it."⁵³³

I have already quoted George and his initial dependence on "the God of the Bible".⁵³⁴ However, during the interview, George remembered:

⁵³⁰ 1E471-476.

⁵³¹ 1F147-148.

⁵³² 1F 181-183.

⁵³³ 1F96-106.

⁵³⁴ 136.

Oh, I tell you where it happened, it just occurred to me where it happened. ... and I say, “Hey, er, Paul,” - I forget his name – “What do you actually do for a living?” – Ferdinand is his, and I went, and he went, “Oh I’m a Catholic priest.” I says, “Shush!” [I laugh] He says, “Yeah, you know the big church rer-rer-rer,” he says, “Yeah, I’ve, I ran that.” So he’s a Catholic priest: that was very real. So real to me. I// And he was an AA member? G// Yeah. ... But the identification unbeknown to me, what I identified, as soon as he said he was a Catholic priest, well, I want a bit of what you’ve got.⁵³⁵

Other participants felt that their family involvement in church carried them into faith, but that a member or minister of their local church spurred them on to volunteering. Within this outlook, Jennifer and Ken both felt that they needed to change churches to respond to the call to mission as they personally understood it. For Jennifer:

I had gone to one particular church and I wanted to do something, and this Minister said to me, I said, ‘look, I want, to go to the hospitals, I want to read the word to them’, ‘well, you can’t just preach the gospel to somebody that’s ill in bed,’ he said, I said, ‘yeah but I want to do something’, ‘well, I’ll find you an old lady to visit.’ I thought, what good’s that? Yes, it would be helping the old lady but that’s not what I’m asking here. So I left that church, went to St David’s; the very first time I went to St David’s they said, and something went bing, bing, bing in my head - and they said at the end of the service, ‘anyone, interested in full-time missionary work, please contact us afterwards’ and so straight away I said, ‘look I, I want to do something.’⁵³⁶

⁵³⁵ G332-333 and G342-350.

⁵³⁶ J1739-1752. See also J1854-1855 quoted on page 152.

Ken also spent time in a church which did not do outreach work, so eventually left for a church that did.⁵³⁷

The more experienced volunteers explained that the church is the main spur to volunteering, though both Linda and Nigel, see this through the lens of reading socially inspiring Christian books which encourage them to serve God in the world. Linda was aware of her excitement after reading about Christian mission in the popular books, “Like um Nicky Cruz or Jackie Pullinger” when a teenager.⁵³⁸ This reportedly propelled her into applying for work on mission ships, and at university she pursued street mission and then offender work.⁵³⁹ She is the only volunteer who stressed that she cared for everyone:

To me a Christian should be someone that is, thinking about the whole time though with whoever they’re meeting so, you know, I think about being Christian with my work colleagues that I sit opposite the desk here, you know.⁵⁴⁰

Similarly, Nigel remembered reading the “Upside-down Kingdom” as a child, which led him to pursue the ideals of Matthew 25.⁵⁴¹

Deborah saw her Christian life mapped out from early childhood, “I can’t remember not having been, a member of the Church of England... started quietly and grewed!”⁵⁴²(Sic.) However, it was not until she led a Bible study course on prayer:

⁵³⁷ K253-268.

⁵³⁸ L239.

⁵³⁹ L234-248.

⁵⁴⁰ L1256-1258.

⁵⁴¹ Donald B Kraybill, *Upside Down Kingdom* (United States of America: Herald Press, 1978) is likely to be the book Nigel referenced, being a popular book, I understood, revised and reprinted 1990, 2003 and 2011.

⁵⁴² 1D18-21.

Everything that you read in the Acts and so on assumes that God will answer. And act. We looked at all the different, times that this had happened, over a few weeks, and were gradually coming to the point where we were, going to in the final session which we did. er. Pray to God, asking what He wanted each one of us to do. And the text we were using was the Matthew, end of Matthew one, [Mat25] you know, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison: and you came to me. And. Using that as a basis, we were asked to pray to God, and ask Him what He wanted us, off that list, to do. Which we did. We sat there for I think it was 45 or 50 minutes, in silent prayer, expecting God to answer. And he blumin' did! I// Ah! [Both laugh briefly.] For all of you? D// It well, you know, there were four of us who decided that prison, visiting was the right way to go. I// Wow! D// Others were sick visiting, others were helping others, or encouraging, that that kind of thing.⁵⁴³

Mark, "Started going to church as a child. Well, apart from the fact it was over the road, I suppose I was always, was always been quite interested in music I think."⁵⁴⁴ However, despite his parents not being church goers, Mark continued, and eventually joined a "non-denominational house group."⁵⁴⁵ Where in a short time:

what got me involved in, in prison work was that we had a member of our church who worked full time in the prison in, in the education department and, er she noted, a lot of opportunities to get involved and, we all got dragged in I think [laughs].⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴³ 1D153-167.

⁵⁴⁴ M308-309.

⁵⁴⁵ M58.

⁵⁴⁶ M136-139.

To conclude this subsection, for all the volunteers, there is a sense that their personal or family ethos is to be someone who helps others. Nevertheless, what initiated the response of the volunteers to the work was a direct request from a church minister (ABEFGJ), church member (C), church group (DKM) or in the case of Linda and Nigel (LN), a Christian book.

The other influence on vocation is God's calling. How did the volunteers perceive God, and how important is it to serve God, whether as Father, Son or Holy Spirit? That is the subject of the next enquiry.

4.3.2 *God tells or guides*

God all the way throughout the Bible talks about helping the widows and the orphans and the marginalised of society on, on, and everybody needs God not just the marginalised. But er yeah God just wants to help, doesn't He? It's God's nature. He just wants, wants people to be saved, He wants people to be living a good life and not, not to be under affliction and oppression, so you just begin to mirror God I guess.

The more you know Him the deeper your relationship gets with Him, you, you - well, it says in the, that we become more like, our aim is to become like Christ, so I think the more of God that you have in you, the more compassion you'll have in you just automatically and through volunteering, you get to increase the - because when you exercise something, I think it builds it up. So through volunteering you're exercising compassion and er yeah and the love of other people and being selfless just really helps [laughs] helps you to put others before yourself.⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴⁷ 2F1020-1033.

This is how Fiona describes God calling her to volunteer. Yes, it includes a call from the Bible, yet she speaks of God calling to her through the example of Jesus in the Bible. It is “God” who “talks about helping the widows...” To Fiona, the practice of Jesus Christ in the Bible is an example of God’s wish to be involved in people’s lives: to “help” which she believes all should emulate. She sees this as a process where the Christian, or at least she, “just begin to mirror God.” This is a grand call, but a noble one. The call is then reinforced, by positive feedback from the work one did, for as one mirrors God, “The more you know Him the deeper your relationship gets with Him”. She wishes to become more like “Christ”, the idealised sense of God on earth. Some lines earlier Fiona speaks of the need for renewal of life today, summarised in the line “the word of God renews your mind and it changes you”.⁵⁴⁸ For her, volunteering permits this renewal to be lived out and reinforced. She grows in gifts, of which “compassion” is the first she identifies and links to “love of other people” before she aims to extend the second great commandment to “put others before yourself”, a modest corrective to what she sees as today’s non-Christian society, so a step towards “love your neighbour as yourself”.

All the volunteers echoed similar experiences. Even Elizabeth, not currently attending a regular church, speaks here with an example, not from her work with the deaf church, but with the more secularly organised Samaritans. She thus states:

I do think about, how Jesus behaved with other people, or the many levels, layers of meaning in the parables. You have an opportunity through volunteering to try and put some of those things into action?

⁵⁴⁸ 2F998.

And then find they make a difference? And, if they don't make a positive difference then you may reflect and seek help, because it maybe, you've got it wrong. Because that's going to happen. And how can you get it right another time. So you do experiment. I mean every time I do a shift with Samaritans, I think I'll do my best, but, you know, these are all trusting people who get in contact, and I'm experimenting my skills on them if you like. [Slight nervous chuckle.] But that's better than them having a complete silence, and we are well trained etcetera etcetera. So, it gives an opportunity; to put some faith into practice and see what happens. And, it does, yeah, it does strengthen it. And it brings one together. There is something very nice about: amongst my fellow Samaritan volunteers, those of us who are Christian: it is nice. We can talk together and share it.⁵⁴⁹

So not only does one gain personal spiritual growth and graces, but also a deepening of fellowship amongst the Christians one feels empowered to seek out and find whilst doing the work of God.

Jennifer put it more simply:

Because, it's not just going to church each week, Jesus went out and we need to go out er because that's, that's where the people need the most help. They're not in the church, I mean there might be some there that just go just for the sake of meeting other people but the help is needed outside.⁵⁵⁰

For Jennifer then, we need to follow the example of Jesus, who calls us beyond the congregation to where the need is greatest. From the challenges there and

⁵⁴⁹ 2E303-318.

⁵⁵⁰ J1854-1857.

those noted above, faith grows. Christopher would agree from scripture and God's call:

C// God has grace that can accept anyone and chooses to go looking for unlikely people and I -

I// Right, that's the example of Jesus you just gave, for example.

C// Yes, I think we should be a bit the same.⁵⁵¹

Not only is this a sense of calling, or a duty from God, but there is a continuing sense of working the way one should be working, a satisfaction, or sense that we are where we should be. Alison speaks of this well, placing working with God, with a fellow Christian, and with those in need as the place she needs to be:

I have a little book that I write things in and I, I saw on the 22nd of December that I'd written, 'I love working with Rachel. When I work with the deaf I feel at one with God. I am where He wants me to be.'⁵⁵²

So, the volunteer is called to where they should be: working beyond the church congregation in the community. This enhanced the sense of vocation, as it led them to engage with a comprehension of God and the Bible from the perspective of their clients, and so constructively tested the volunteers' Christian faith.

4.3.3 *Call and culture*

The role of culture in volunteering was not directly addressed when the methodology was designed, though it is accepted that culture is part of the environment.⁵⁵³ However, its importance to the volunteers became apparent. Firstly, common words used regarding faith are: the most used - "church/es",

⁵⁵¹ 2C408-413.

⁵⁵² 2A1623-1625.

⁵⁵³ See Methodology, 79-118.

and the fifth most used - “Christianity”.⁵⁵⁴ If one speaks of church and of Christians as part of a defining culture, then one is defining an alternative cultural group, namely the un-churched or non-churched and the non-Christians.

The culture of a para-church organisation, the Prison Fellowship, is spoken of by Mark, but it is by no means a reliable link to culture beyond church,

I mean Prison Fellowship as sort of, as an organisation has sort of, waxed and waned throughout that, so sometimes, I mean sometimes we’ve just been working directly with the er the chaplains, sometimes we’ve been working through Prison Fellowship. er, but er at-at, you know and, and Prison Fellowship has gone through a number of cycles of, of groups being active and then groups being disbanded and then groups being reformed...⁵⁵⁵

All but Fiona and Mark speak directly of cultural differences. In addition to the quotes above, Alison speaks of communication problems with the deaf culture.⁵⁵⁶ Barbara tells of political and governmental issues relating to the deportation of foreign nationals.⁵⁵⁷ Christopher uses the terms “mix” and “range” to explain differences in people who engage with his volunteering.⁵⁵⁸ Deborah describes the many cultures of foreign prisoners and the culture of the prisoners’ values set against middle class expectations.⁵⁵⁹ Elizabeth tells of “people you wouldn’t normally communicate with”,⁵⁶⁰ whilst Ken highlights the differences between the church congregation and its acceptances versus that of the culture beyond and of the political and governmental influence in state

⁵⁵⁴ Appendix 9.

⁵⁵⁵ M231-240.

⁵⁵⁶ 2A976-1009, 1029-1030.

⁵⁵⁷ 2B101-114.

⁵⁵⁸ 2C232-249.

⁵⁵⁹ 2D1298-1319.

⁵⁶⁰ 2E509-515, and 2E62-68.

institutions.⁵⁶¹ Linda talks of a distinct Christian identity;⁵⁶² whilst Nigel has a protracted discussion of the cultural difference of prisoners being similar to the cultural differences of those in Africa.⁵⁶³

In the case of the participant most integrated with his sending church (Christopher), the culture of Christian volunteering in the community beyond the congregation is valued. This is indicated in the following conversation with Christopher:

C// The leaders of the different activities are got together every six months or so and we do hear the good stories that are happening in other activities and some of those get repeated in front of the congregation so that there's a flow of good stories. So I have more of a, I, I think there are people doing similar things in other towns that it would be helpful to know more about. I think we're quite good at expressing the richness of stuff that's going on amongst us, and the range of different ministries or activities or projects.

I// It's more about other projects in other places?

C// Yes, and particularly the ones that are most similar that you could most learn from or share with.

I// Mm, yeah, whether that would be some sort of manual guide of projects, church projects or something?

C// We have suggested it could be as simple as having a, starting with a directory, yes.⁵⁶⁴

Christopher's suggestion of a directory offers a very practical support document for churches with Christian volunteers who work beyond their congregations.

⁵⁶¹ K459-560, and K488-492.

⁵⁶² L660-662, L1256-1274.

⁵⁶³ N865-931.

⁵⁶⁴ 2C860-879.

Christopher commented upon a similar project in Sweden that he had observed and learnt from.⁵⁶⁵

The working culture of all the volunteers is very different from the church culture in which they are schooled in faith, some are aware of how this has impinged upon the development of their faith. All the volunteers referred to working in a culture beyond their local church, either directly or indirectly and some more wittingly than others. What becomes apparent is that it is important to practise one's faith in a culture alien to the teaching of it in order to test the taught principles. New insights resulting from such a cultural transformation of faith elements are seen as an affirming and exciting possibility. An individual's faith does not remain static, but becomes a dynamic involvement of faith, culture (as experienced), individual belief and church teaching, which might all need to change in pursuance of an eternal truth. Overall, volunteers see this as a very good thing. George put it this way:

we need to be more involved in the secular. Volunteering movements. Nothing to do with church. Why? Because, it's an opportunity to show, that, we're not, inward thinking. We're outward thinking, we're not afraid to be in the middle of, secular world sharing our faith, in positive ways. Both have been a bit proactive, you know, and not been afraid to talk about Jesus. Someone says, "Oh why you doing this? Oh it's 'cause, Jesus wants me to do it." Or. I think that's not a bad thing, and I think, we could all be encouraged to do more of it. Not just for the purposes of evangelism, but just because then we get to see and hang out with non-believers. Non-believers are great they they-test you, they pull, they pull your faith apart.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁵ 2C888-906.

⁵⁶⁶ G1247-1258.

George begins with the initial thought that it is out of evangelism that one should speak in secular settings, “an opportunity to show... we’re not inward thinking” , “not been afraid to talk about Jesus”, but shortly after these evangelistic statements, he continued to reflect, “Non-believers... test you, they pull, they pull you apart.” This for him is something which is “great”, and “we could all be encouraged to do more”.

This is not about the ignorance of those outside a parish church environment. When speaking of prison culture Barbara noted, “the Chaplain said to me, “This is the only place [a prison chapel for deportee foreign nationals] I’ve known where I’ve had to stop people praying””⁵⁶⁷. Engaging with a culture beyond that of a parish church is not simply about volunteers witnessing to non-believers or the spiritually unaware, but is a much richer experience for all involved. For Christopher it is more a point of stretching his own faith by volunteering in another culture:

Something about giving it direction, that it ceases to be just intellectual, it has some point, and that it brings in challenge, both intellectual challenge and decision making challenge and, people skills challenge, that it stretches, faith, so both stretch, stretches intellectually and makes you think things out and stretches faith in whether this can be done or not, er and will it be a success, er and I think that kind of stretching leads to personal growth for us as well.⁵⁶⁸

One has to think and respond in a way that is helpful, and this is challenging in terms of “intellectual... decision making... people skills... personal growth”, as noted above. In an earlier comment, of Christopher’s, this also means

⁵⁶⁷ 2B527-529.

⁵⁶⁸ 2C669-674.

discovering through the errors of “the other”, that “everybody’s flawed, and that you’re flawed... and that’s okay”.⁵⁶⁹ Something that makes him reflect on chance, grace and love, themes common to all the volunteers. It is this cultural exchange which enabled these observations to be made.

Not all volunteers showed such humility. Jennifer defended herself when I raise the issue of inter-faith understanding, wishing to “just hope that, you know, they might think that my faith is, is more real than theirs.”⁵⁷⁰ In contrast, Elizabeth saw the mix with other faiths as an opportunity for the church to become more human, and so “mix with people, who are not part of a congregation, who may belong to other faiths, who may belong to none.”⁵⁷¹ Nigel hopes that such engagement will lead to constructive change:

But the church have (Sic) got to find different ways of, of communicating at the moment, because for a lot of people we’re just a, we’re in a way meaningless really. There’s no connection between what people do and what the church does.⁵⁷²

However Alison recognises that such inter-cultural communication is risky, or “It’s quite frightening as well because if you’re telling them something and they’re picking up it incorrectly, then you’re doing more damage.”⁵⁷³ This is something Alison felt with particular regard to the deaf community’s language and culture. Nevertheless, this outlined both the joys and risks of speaking to another culture and to a community beyond one’s own local church. Such inter-cultural communication has an effect upon the faith of each volunteer.

⁵⁶⁹ 2C232-249.

⁵⁷⁰ J1602-1603.

⁵⁷¹ 2E64-66.

⁵⁷² N915-917.

⁵⁷³ 2A1046-1047.

4.3.4 *Corporate responsibilities*

The volunteers feel that all are equal before God, but Deborah went further to say that we should all be “agents of God’s love”, a message she recalls offering to her local church, though in common with others, she does not feel heard:

I said to them, we are called to, support those, whom, God loves, God forgives, and, who need a second chance. God is the God of the second chance, and, you know, will honour anyone who tries, to change their life with His help. And we must be agents of that, but it didn’t do any good, I didn’t get through to anybody.⁵⁷⁴

No reason for this inability to be heard by the local church is given.

Boundary issues (the boundary between what is permissible and what is not) are important for Christopher, who realised it is not simply a case of “forgive and forget” where:

forgiveness, acceptance, welcoming people back - somehow finding where it is that you do have to set boundaries... There has to be some kind of message that’s about, - we accept you and we’re less judging than other people but it doesn’t mean you can get away with anything, particularly if it affects the people around you.⁵⁷⁵

Barbara extends compassion, seeing prison as a place of containment, and the world outside as a tough place which offers little to support a person who has found faith:

He’s done his time. Can’t he now come out as a free man? Instead is coming out as a sex offender. So when he comes out, however much he believes and trusts in God, he’s going to have to come against, m, you know. No access to his children because his wife, or

⁵⁷⁴ 1D766-775.

⁵⁷⁵ 2C634-647.

ex-partner won't want him to have access. No accommodation because whoever he knew before now won't take him in, so he's got to go to Home Office accommodation. [The] Chance of him working, although he thinks he will, I think he's in cloud cuckoo land,⁵⁷⁶

More practically, but uniquely, Nigel reflects constructively on the officers of the prison, whom he understands as “short staffed” with a difficult job to do.⁵⁷⁷

So how do the volunteers communicate their faith in this culture beyond church; how do they speak of God, prayer, love and other aspects of faith counted as “faith” in the list in Table 3 on page 164? The volunteers are aware that they speak from a “church culture” to a culture beyond the local church congregation. Could what they tell me of such faith issues offer insight into their theological understanding? The next group of faith aspects listed seeks to identify what the volunteers are communicating and sometimes what they refrain from communicating, so that later analysis may reveal where volunteers could be aided in their hope to communicate as Christians involved in the world beyond the church.

4.4 Use of Christian faith words

Table 3 (page 164) shows the coding of faith words used. It shows how the espoused theology of their faith words are important to the volunteers as they all record an increase in their understanding of them as a result of their work.

These words are now discussed in more detail.

⁵⁷⁶ 2B666-673.

⁵⁷⁷ N461-478.

4.4.1 *Prayer*

Prayer is something all the volunteers clearly value. They speak freely and unselfconsciously about their prayer lives. Most spoke confidently as if to affirm their personal proficiency and use of prayer. The word “prayer” is the fourth most frequently used word in the interviews.⁵⁷⁸ All but Alison and Barbara express the feeling that their volunteering enables them to become more committed to prayer. Elizabeth, the volunteer with the least regular church attendance, expresses a faithful commitment to prayer, but unlike the other volunteers, questions its efficacy, or perhaps what efficacy might mean when talking of prayer.⁵⁷⁹ However, all pray, or aspired to pray, at least daily in some formal way, setting time aside, usually in the morning, in addition to sporadic times throughout the day.⁵⁸⁰ It is as if all the volunteers accept their need of God, and a desire to communicate, or remain faithful to God through prayer.

Christopher offers his views on prayer and Godly action:

So that was a very specifically Christian project. I// So 1989 was a Christian project. C// Yes. So it was part of the culture to pray together, to be seeking God together. I then did a very similar job but in a secular project, but I definitely saw it through spiritual eyes, and it happened that several Christians came to work there at the same time and we were able to make some changes which we thought were, important and made it more, Godly; I suppose.⁵⁸¹

Here Christopher contrasts a Christian project in which the workers intentionally pray together, which is “seeking God together” with work in “a secular project”

⁵⁷⁸ Appendix 9.

⁵⁷⁹ 166-167.

⁵⁸⁰ Appendix 1.

⁵⁸¹ 1C140-145.

where “several Christians came to work there at the same time”. In the Christian project, prayer is something that happened together in “Seeking God”, though little is said at this point about what happened when God was found. In the secular environment, prayer together is not the point he offered, but there is a suggestion of a common mind amongst the “several Christians” that for him meant “we were able to make some changes which we thought were, important and made it more, Godly; I suppose.” Typical of Christopher, he left space for reflection or critique by adding, “I suppose” to his assertive “made it more Godly.”

Christopher’s later statements highlight a common element amongst the volunteers about the way in which volunteering stimulates prayer:

I// Will you be praying more or less because of that?

C// More. But not in the sense of, “it stimulates my faith, therefore I pray more,” but more because there’s more crises to pray about!

[Laughter] I think what it probably does is: I think probably I’ve become, more thought out and more: less doing things by accident, and, more, thinking out the next steps and praying about the next steps. So it’s maybe given my faith focus, and, maybe it’s speaking to me about: that God may have planted specific stuff in me. er. In terms of interests and gifts and that kind of thing. And certainly, as we develop the houses and particularly as we develop the business, I think that’s reflected in the path what we see what we’re doing is seeing the value in people and the gifts in people and drawing them out, so that they can then, go an - I// That’s out of a practical outcome? C// Yes.⁵⁸²

Christopher is a volunteer manager of a homeless project which includes dealing with ex-offenders. The volunteering exposes him to far more “crises” in the

⁵⁸² 1C335-346.

lives of those he supports, and in the funding and running of the project.⁵⁸³

Prayer is something he feels compelled to do with astute attention, he has “more crises to pray about” and he has to think through what this prayer means, saying “I’ve become, more thought out and more: less doing things by accident.” The suggestion is that his values and purposes have received meaning from paying attention to prayer and his “thinking out the next steps and praying about the next steps”.

Later, I asked Christopher to clarify practice and thoughts of God:

C// Oh more but, the practical work is not the only motivation for that: that’s partly, where I’m at in life, and having done the theology course and -

I// It’s difficult to untangle what’s the practical work and what’s the theology.

C// It probably colours what I get out of reading scripture, that I’m, seeing, how Jesus was with the wider world. Particular strands in scripture. And I think because we’re setting up specifically Christian projects, so when I meet with my co-director, we pray a lot. So that: so in that sense, my spiritual life is enhanced by the volunteering. And that is because of, of the flavour that we want to give the project.⁵⁸⁴

Christopher’s thoughts and prayers are supported by scripture, yet in order to bring thought, theology and faithful practice together, “we pray a lot”. It is as a result of these thoughts, reading and prayer that “my spiritual life is enhanced by the volunteering”. It is something he is more than willing to desire as it is “the flavour that we want to give the project.” The call is felt not to be simply for

⁵⁸³ 1C328-347.

⁵⁸⁴ 1C514-523.

him as an individual, but as a Christian body, “we”. This is typical of Christopher’s mature and articulate expression.

Table 3: Faith in God.

An increase (or decrease) in your understanding or practice of:	
Faith: you own or perceived in others	ABCDEFGHIJKLMN
God equipping you	ABCDEFGHIJKLN
Grace	ABCDEFGHIJKLMN
Healing	ABCDEFGHIJLMN
Virtuous identity in volunteering	ABCDEFGHIJKLMN
Bible reading	BCDFGJMN
Compassion	BCDFGJKLMN
Evangelism	BCDFGJKMN
Forgiveness of self and/or to others	BCDFGJKLMN
Spiritual practice	BCDFGM
Changing self	BCDFGJKLMN
Good & evil	BCFGMN
Power/healing in self or others	BCDFGJN
Prayer	CDFGJKLMN
Discernment	BEFGKLM
Human Potential, own and/or others	CDFGJKLMN
Salvation, own and/or others	CDFGJKLN

God the Holy Spirit	EFJL
Miracles	CFMN
Hospitality (welcome)	EFL
Creation	G
God Trinity	F
Other Faiths more understood	D
God the Father.	L
God the Son.	L
Life after death.	L

Key:
Above ----- Greater than 50% of cohort
Below ----- Less than 34% of cohort
 Green: an increase.
 Red: a decrease. But there are none in this table.
 Black: no change noted.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMN The initial of the given name of each volunteer interviewed.

In general terms, nine of the twelve volunteers agree that prayer gives access to God's strength over their own.⁵⁸⁵ Five expressly pray for specific aspects of God's gifts.⁵⁸⁶ Eight experience answers to prayer in terms of healing.⁵⁸⁷ Volunteering is expressly mentioned as a spur to an improved prayer life by six. Five felt that prayer offers instruction, or a prophetic word.⁵⁸⁸

Prayerful support for the work of the volunteers is available to most, but only from their local church body in the case of an appreciative Christopher.⁵⁸⁹

Prayer support most commonly (in five cases: AFGLK) comes from two or more individuals from the congregation; with three receiving support from their home groups (CFL) and three from PF groups.⁵⁹⁰ In total, nine of the twelve volunteers told me that they are supported in prayer by others, including Nigel, who implies this from his friendship with his local vicar. Perhaps this explains why Christopher, Deborah, Fiona and Nigel felt that it is easier to pray for their clients than their church members, with Barbara expressing disdain for her church, saying,

B// Because these people [Prisoners] have got such huge problems, and I don't, I, you know, I think we're [husband too] probably dropping out the prayer ministry team [at her church] in September. Because: I, just find it difficult to, find enthusiasm to, I don't know? I mean do enjoy praying for people. And I'm not definite we're going to drop out, but we're. We're sort of. Finding it, quite hard work.

⁵⁸⁵ ABCDEFGLN.

⁵⁸⁶ AFGLK.

⁵⁸⁷ ABDFGJLM: in terms of mind BFLM; attitude BFM; body JF and in one case, Deborah, "calming".

⁵⁸⁸ BCDFGK and BCFGK respectively.

⁵⁸⁹ 2C173-181.

⁵⁹⁰ FLM. For details of PF work, see 17-18.

I// Yeah. Because?

B// I me. The, issues are not, about the murder that they did, it's a smaller issue or? No. More my issue is "you're Christians, pray for yourselves, get on with it: get a friend to pray for you." You know, "sort it out". We're not, we're not talking about praying for non-Christians, we're talking about praying for Christians really and I feel, that's my my my sympathy level for [half-chuckling] Christians is very low. When you see the sort of things that, you know, I think the need level is, so much more real somehow.⁵⁹¹

Four volunteers emphatically stressed that one should "pray as though you believe it should happen" and that "God answers prayer."⁵⁹² However, Elizabeth, though not connected to a regular congregation, offers a considered critique of prayer,

E// You see this is again probably why [sniff] I find it difficult to be, a fully paid up member of a, church congregation. Because people will say, "Oh no this is wonderful you know, God's answered my prayers." And I'll sometimes say, well how do you know? And they feel they've had a message or a sign or something, and I'm thinking, at times I'm a bit sceptical, and sometimes I think weh I just, "Doesn't work like that for me!" And I sort of then think, well is it me? You know. [Catching throat, as a slight laugh.] I don't think it is really. I think we're just, all different all of us.

I// But you did say, "God does answer prayers." So -

E// Yes! Yes, yes, yeah. Because things do turn out and do work out. But I have to go forward in blind faith sometimes, and then I think, "Yeah, that's worked out." But others sometimes seem to have a. I don't know, they seem to see a few, street lamps along the way, whereas, mm.⁵⁹³

⁵⁹¹ 2B221-239.

⁵⁹² DFGJ.

⁵⁹³ 1E555-582.

For all this confidence and reflection, or perhaps because of it, there remain questions that went unanswered, and some are in the form of critical observations. Elizabeth voices some of these, yet she prays more with a hope for the future, saying “I have to go forward in blind faith sometimes, and then I think, yeah, that’s worked out.”

The volunteers demonstrate great affection for prayer. They are apparently seeking to communicate with the “God of love” as noted earlier, so naturally loving action flows on from this.

4.4.2 Love and compassion

As far as the volunteers are concerned, most consider love and compassion to be of the same root, and almost exchangeable as words. Compassion is therefore considered here as an outcome of love, or evidence of it.

Appendix 10 shows a collection of the discussions relating to love and compassion. Generally, though most volunteers begin with their views of love coming from God in some way, their discussion of love and its place in their voluntary work are pursued in different ways, as if the volunteers are responding in the immediate context of the interview. Motivation has already been discussed above. In terms of the love of God, Christopher, Deborah, Elizabeth, Fiona, George, Linda and Nigel, said that it is the love of God which is their main motivation, though in different forms. This love is seen as directly from God, or as a relationship of love exemplified by the Trinity, or the idea that the Holy Spirit is gifted to them so they may love others, sometimes as Christ might love, or a mixture of these ideas. In some cases this love is extended to the

church “The bride of Christ” for Fiona.⁵⁹⁴ In other cases, love for others means falling out of love with their previous ways. Barbara makes several mentions of this, where she claims “my compassion for church has completely disappeared.”⁵⁹⁵ Later Barbara claims that her church read her reports without understanding, but that it was not her job to challenge this, as she felt it “traumatic” to stand and talk to a congregation.⁵⁹⁶ Deborah wishes to question her church about why they just did not pick up on her love of ex-offenders as part of God’s love, even when she tries to explain this to her congregation.⁵⁹⁷ Desire within this love is mentioned by Linda, who, when talking of loving compassion to those who struggle to amend broken lives, reflects that it is love born of desire:

That’s [compassion] still sort of the main thing, I think the main motivator and I said it was also compassion but that desire to see transformation.⁵⁹⁸

Love is seen as a response to God or as a gift from God, or as a consequence of being made in God’s image, or a consequence of being made by God who was originally in relationship as the Trinity, or a mixture of these. There is little certainty here, yet such certainty is not deemed important, as Nigel said:

I’ve always had quite a simple faith really, it is that er. I believe that, you know, God loves all of us equally and wants us all to return to Him really and, you know, and I, you, you can wrap that up in a lot of theological arguments and what not, but to me, you know, that’s, that’s the basis of my faith, you know. So when I, so when I look at, you know, these guys, you know, God made them, they’re

⁵⁹⁴ 1F497-498.

⁵⁹⁵ 1B451-562.

⁵⁹⁶ 1B507-530.

⁵⁹⁷ 159, 1D765-775.

⁵⁹⁸ L10004-10005.

made in His image, He loves them, He can't love them anymore or any less, and His heart is for them to [laughs] for them to return to Him, and you can, you know, you can wrap all, all that up with a lot of theological arguments but that's the basis of it really.

The simplicity is that God wants His children to return to him, and, I think He wants, so the basis of, you know, God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit is a relational one, and I, I just believe that God wants, us also to have that relationship with Him but to transfer that relationship to others. So my, Christianity is based on relationship; I need to, you know, extend that, if you like, love out to others really, and, and so that everything comes down to a relational thing really, and I think if you can build up relationship with others and you can treat them as er equal...⁵⁹⁹

Nigel realises that this is counter-cultural, and that loving as Jesus would sends one to places one would not otherwise go:

If, you read the Daily, you know, Mail, this, this isn't slander, you know, you would er, you know, you'd get this, you know, lock them up throw away the key, or the homeless in some way it's their fault they're homeless, or, addicts well, again you know it's their fault, but, and, and to some extent some of that may be true but unless somebody reaches out to them with some sort of generosity of heart or love, you know, I don't see how they're ever going to change really, and I'm convinced that that is where Jesus would go, - and he'd say, go and, you know, I am a Christian and, you know, my Christianity is based on a follower of Christ so I suppose, we need to go where Christ would go really.⁶⁰⁰

Love is expressed in ways other than as unconditional, despite the unconditional nature of love. This conditional love may have its roots in an attempt to be real as a human being. For example, Fiona reflects upon the nature of God's love

⁵⁹⁹ N358-375.

⁶⁰⁰ N399-407.

which initiated her response, but feels that the church requires its members to set others free to see God in their lives - a nuanced approach, accepting love, but seeking to declare God to them:

in my kind of theology that I've got, and this church, it definitely involves like, the love of God and the father heart of God, but the calling of this church is really deliverance. When I say deliverance, I don't mean exorcism, I mean, I mean deliverance as in people seeing God moves in their lives in a big way.⁶⁰¹

Fiona later develops her notion of this love:

it's just surrender, will you surrender, will you, will you obey God's commands, will you love Him, that's it.⁶⁰²

... but you want to please God and you want - and he says those who love me, obey my commands, all the way through the Bible it's very clear.⁶⁰³

Jennifer has a similar desire to love so that the clients would not go to hell, and believes that only by love could she show a better way.⁶⁰⁴

Only Alison admits that "I don't love everybody" but immediately added "but I do have to look for the good, good in them."⁶⁰⁵

George also provides an insight into the common Christian phrase, "speaking the truth in love". George had hinted at this, so I asked him to expand:

I// Speaking the truth in love, and that's a very difficult thing to do.

G// It's very difficult because most people 'cause,

I// And do you need to hear the truth in love?

⁶⁰¹ 2F234-247.

⁶⁰² 2F1308-1309.

⁶⁰³ 2F1335-1336.

⁶⁰⁴ J620-635, shown more fully on 141.

⁶⁰⁵ 1A694-696.

G// It's got to be very gentle, and it's got not being a way to pull, pull the other person down.⁶⁰⁶

George considers “speaking the truth in love” requires the ability to first “hear the truth in love” and then to discern that it will be “very gentle” and constructive.

There is a pragmatic element to this love; it is felt that a human response is important to the giver. This is not noblesse-oblige, expecting the client to be grateful for his interventions, but simply a way of keeping up morale with evidence that something changed constructively because of what he offered. Even though George knows it is work in the service of God alone that is essential, a very human need for a response to the voluntary work matters.

This leads several volunteers to suggest that the more people one helps, the more likely one is to see results, and so get a constructive response. The same people are also quick to say that they are not looking to evangelise as a priority, but to love. A response from an evangelised person is nevertheless an undeniable bonus! This is typified in the words of Fiona:

I think when you're volunteering, you get to pray with people more and, and I do believe that with, with er healing, it is to do with numbers as well because not everybody gets healed so you have to pray with more; if you want to see God's healing then you pray with more people.⁶⁰⁷

And from Linda,

I think, you know, it depends how much you, how much emotion you put into it as well of yourself, because I think I learnt quite early

⁶⁰⁶ G251-254.

⁶⁰⁷ 2F1246-1249.

on at one of these many, many conferences that, a guy was recommending almost to help a lot of people because he found if he focused all his attention on one person. If they then did kind of backslide and, you know, get stuck in back into drugs or whatever it would be, he would be so kind of impacted and hurt, you know, he wanted to invest in more people almost [laughs] so that it wasn't all, you know.⁶⁰⁸

So this love is in need of supportive results in order that the volunteer will be encouraged.

Love and compassion appear to be the bedrock of the volunteers' motivation. How this translates into a more active approach to forgiveness will now be pursued.

4.4.3 *Forgiveness: Of self and others*

Forgiveness can be seen as a radical outcome of such love and compassion. With three exceptions, the volunteers identify with the offenders or disadvantaged people that they worked with. For those volunteers, all of us need forgiveness. Such forgiveness enables all people to face up to the consequences of their actions and reactions, and the need to recognise what we may have otherwise overlooked. The three exceptions are Alison, Barbara and Jennifer, who either do not mention the word "forgiveness" at all, or in the case of Jennifer, used it once as a query to the interviewer pressing the point, conceding (possibly by the interviewer's clumsy approach) that her forgiveness had increased.⁶⁰⁹ This is a marked departure from the expression of the other

⁶⁰⁸ L757-766, the conferences mentioned are offered by organisations linked to offender work, including PF and large churches such as Holy Trinity Brompton.

⁶⁰⁹ Appendix 9 and J1406-1408.

volunteers.⁶¹⁰ Barbara mentions how a prisoner might be one who “turns around” as in becoming a non-offender.⁶¹¹ She later mentions a “miraculous conversion” of an offender going straight, and further, God’s invitation to “draw near to me, and I’ll draw near to you”, forgiveness here is at best implied, but unacknowledged.⁶¹² Nevertheless, forgiveness is an important issue for ex-offenders and prisoners (where Barbara and Jennifer volunteer). Only five volunteers mentioned the “Sycamore Tree Course”, though others may assist on the course, which features forgiveness as part of the restorative justice element, or they may have had further conversations about forgiveness with volunteers and offenders involved in the course.⁶¹³ Nevertheless, forgiveness is an issue for any offender who remains imprisoned because of an offence and an issue for those who have experienced disadvantage by society or others.

Volunteers see offenders, or the disadvantaged, as struggling with their sense of guilt and/or victimisation, fleshed out in terms of responsibilities (their own and those who have influence over them) for their or others’ actions. This is where compassion and honesty are practised by the volunteers, who readily share their personal experiences when talking to their clients about forgiveness. They give examples of their own frail humanity so that they can identify on a human level with the struggle that their clients have with sin and forgiveness. Elizabeth readily shares her inner turmoil with regard to sin and her need for forgiveness:

I think I battle with forgiveness of self. er. I think confession, confession of sin, is - important to me in my prayer. er. - But you do

⁶¹⁰ Appendix 9.

⁶¹¹ 2B418-423, and 2B723-727.

⁶¹² 2B684-692 and 2B696-705.

⁶¹³ Deborah, Ken, Linda, Mark and Nigel all mention their involvement with the “Sycamore Tree Course”. For definition of the course see 17-18.

better every day. You know, th-there's sin. I// Another difficult one isn't it. E// Yes it is. There's sin as it is recognised in the world, well, I obviously don't go round doing those things, and [tapping table with finger] touch wood having been in prison etcetera etcetera. But it's the little things, you know, when you've let slip a comment, and you know it's not right. And you know all those things, or, you've let someone down because you did say you'd ring them and you haven't, or or what-have-you. No there there's all kinds of sins to confess every day quietly in your personal relationship with God...⁶¹⁴

And so saying with certain things that my father did maybe that that messed me up a little bit, here and there. So what? He did his best. So I went through a forgiveness thing, and now that's evaporated. So I feel, I I've never been totally tested, but I hope, I hope I could always forgive - whatever happens. Do y'know, I mean, I just. Marvel at the forgiveness that some other human beings have been able to do.⁶¹⁵

Yet earlier in the conversation Elizabeth shares her intimate frailty in order that the other might "see something they like and, would like to be a compassionate person too, and can find their own relationship with God."⁶¹⁶ Here is shown no empty wish, but a vulnerability born of a desire to share something of God's forgiveness to lead others to a "relationship with God." Elizabeth recognised that sin was pervasive, even when she did not do "touch wood", "sin as it is recognised by the world" in a way that leads to prison. She nevertheless recognises sin as sin, and the need for forgiveness. The human capacity for forgiveness causes her to "Marvel". She reflects that she has come to terms with

⁶¹⁴ 1E776-785.

⁶¹⁵ 1E816-822.

⁶¹⁶ 1E789-790.

those who may have sinned against her, and finds compassion after her forgiveness of her father's errors, as he "did his best" and, "so what?" A brave report to hurts received when a child.

With similar humility, George accepts that he "is not there yet" in terms of being forgiving or coping with sin. At the same time, George, like Fiona and Nigel, said that before he became a Christian, or, in Fiona's case, a Christian working with offenders, they were unforgiving to those they had heard about who had committed crimes that offended their sensibilities, or were aimed against them.

So for George:

It's an ongoing process really. Of - being willing, to forgive: and being willing to - to forgive others really. Because many people do and say, not very nice things. Including myself. I think, self-hate, self, that's the hardest one to get over. Because, you know, generally the one that'll beat the self the most is me, when I've done something wrong. But that's, doesn't help anybody, (not me or anybody else), but, that's grown. I'm not there yet with it all.⁶¹⁷

Whilst Fiona finds her earlier arrogance regrettable:

That definitely with what, with going, into the prisons, and working with ex-offenders, that definitely helps to be able to forgive others, because I remember, there was a, the case - now when I hear of really bad cases in the news, I would used to, like somebody like a paedophile or like murderers I would, I would, in my head I would condemn then. I would be like, that person needs to go to hell. But now [laughs] since I've been work: since doing the volunteering it's like kind of has opened up my mind to more the way that God would think of that person, like that person is a child of God, made by God, to be in a relationship with God, and actually is forgiven.

⁶¹⁷ G1007-1014.

All they have to do is ask for forgiveness and they'll be forgiven and it will be washed away, so who am I to judge that, to judge anybody? I'm not.⁶¹⁸

Mindful of both the offence of those she supports and her own sinfulness and forgiveness, she concludes: "who am I to judge" that person too is "a child of God". Elizabeth has a similar view that:

I have been given huge grace in that - forgiveness of others, it's not my place to forgive them is it. I can bring them something and hope somehow.⁶¹⁹

Whilst Deborah states "God is the God of the second chance and will honour anyone who tries, to change their life with His help."⁶²⁰ Whilst Barbara looks to God's unconditional relationship with us "as God says, "You draw near to me, and I'll draw near to you." And He does."⁶²¹

Mark understands the above human forgiveness as bound up with God's forgiveness, which is "even more mysterious" after he had also experienced "Restorative Justice" courses.⁶²²

I mean you learn a lot about, well, you learn a lot about human forgiveness and yes, God, yes God's, God's forgiveness gets even more mysterious I think [laughs] as you see what, what has to be forgiven yeah. But, certainly you learn a lot about human forgiveness and actually, and how human forgiveness helps, the victims as well because, you know, you think, well, forgiveness is

⁶¹⁸ 2F1083-1093.

⁶¹⁹ 1E786-788.

⁶²⁰ 1D773-774.

⁶²¹ 2B698-699.

⁶²² Restorative Justice Courses endeavour to permit the offender and victim to meet in a safe environment, so that the offender could hear from the victim what effect their offence had upon them. Details of such a course may be found on the UK Government (CPS) web site http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/p_to_r/restorative_justice/ accessed 25th April 2017.

helping the offender, because they can be let off or whatever, but actually it's about helping yourself as a victim, and getting rid of all that bitterness.⁶²³

Forgiveness is recognised as God's, reflected in human experience, and as such, is a good thing as Mark understood it, as it helped all parties to get "rid of bitterness."

Nigel reflects at some length upon a family incident for which he eventually asked forgiveness:

there was just one verse and it was two columns and it was about a third down, it was er and it talked about John the Baptist and it, it just said he came to turn the hearts of the fathers towards their children - [Nigel struggles not catch his voice] - and that broke me and I, I, you know, I was reduced to tears, went along the corridor and said, 'look xxx [His son] forgive me', and he said, 'it's okay dad, it's my fault' and, and, you know, we became reconciled, and that was a big turning, point in my relationship with my children because I, I could then genuinely say, you know, 'I'm sorry for what I've done', or 'I'm sorry for what I've said.' Whereas before I was probably, that wouldn't have come so easily, and I suppose that was a breaking of something in me - that God did which actually then of course influences you going forward.⁶²⁴

This is typical of the volunteer relating to something real and intimate so that they could plumb the depths of forgiveness in order to share with offenders.

These prisoners have had their offences laid open in court, but no other culpability in terms of social or family disadvantage has been examined, so

⁶²³ M894-900.

⁶²⁴ N542-557.

forgiveness is a major issue for them. The volunteers are willing to talk to the prisoners, attempting equal vulnerability and candour.

For Nigel, later in the dialogue, the block to forgiveness is that “it’s only when you can stop making excuses that you can actually then start to take responsibility and move on.”⁶²⁵ He reflects that they are in prison “because of what they did, not what anybody else did”, however, he realises that the effect of their crime has an impact not only on “their victim but their families and people that they love...” it is this which he believes helps them “come to a realisation and take responsibility.”⁶²⁶

This is not where Nigel begins in the above quotation, as he recognises that the background to the lives of the offenders might have lead them to respond in the criminal ways they did, “if I’d been part of their story, I’d almost certainly be in prison with them.”⁶²⁷ The volunteers identify with the struggle their clients have with forgiveness, and rather than take a view from a position of superior knowledge, they attempt to empathise from their own experiences in order to gain a truer appreciation of forgiveness and its effect. This is maintained by the suggestion that they are “not there yet with it all” from George above.

In the above comments, many thought that “self-forgiveness” for crimes or sins committed, is an important issue for many of their clients. Whilst Linda, true to her usual professionally trained approach, speaks in the third person about the place the Sycamore Tree Course played,

⁶²⁵ N634-636, see 180-181.

⁶²⁶ N638-641, see 180-181.

⁶²⁷ N501-502.

But then ultimately also forgiving themselves is the big hurdle for most of them. So that comes into play in quite a lot of the discussions.⁶²⁸

4.4.4 *Forgiveness and shame*

Fiona recognises that shame may also occur when one realises one's sin and the need for forgiveness. After self-reflection as a result of engaging with those she cares for:

I was, well, needing a lot of forgiveness, and being, seeing the depth like the lengths that God, because we always, we sing a song in Ashkelon City Church that says that like our shame was deeper than sea, your grace is deeper still, and our wrong was further than the something, your grace is further still. And when you actually see [sighs] yeah you see that put in, into practice, then you really do begin to grasp the depths of God's forgiveness and yeah it just opens your eyes to it.

I think you just need to experience it. It's the experience of seeing it work out, actually seeing it in front of your eyes, and, and how that, that life is transformed and seeing the joy that that person has and knowing what they were like before, it's amazing.⁶²⁹

In this passage, her sin is in need of forgiveness and is readily linked to “shame”, whilst it is God alone who forgives, by “grace.” However seeing the work of God's forgiveness in others reveals to her own sin and God's forgiveness, as the transformation of others “just opens your eyes to it”, when she observed grace “put into practice” in the forgiveness experienced by those she supported. Here Fiona had found a trope of her home church from a song, “our song...” that “our shame was deeper than the sea, your grace is deeper

⁶²⁸ L964-965.

⁶²⁹ 2F1120-1130.

still”. This breaks down her own boundaries to God’s forgiveness only when she sees the shame of sin for others transformed by God’s grace and forgiveness “put in, into practice” by her clients.

4.4.5 *Forgiveness and welcome*

Unconditional welcome is also seen as part of forgiveness. Welcome is not conditional upon a positive response to the forgiveness offered and indeed volunteers readily reflect upon those who appear to ignore this forgiveness, or fail to change their lives.⁶³⁰ Part of this welcome is the self-reflection that we all maintain unresolved or sinful thoughts, though here Deborah does not use such theological language, as she openly confesses “How much muck I was carrying from the past”, which is suggested in the following passage:

’Cause I had to understand the course [Sycamore Tree Course], deep down, in order to deliver it. And, I hadn’t realised how much, muck I was carrying from the past, which needed, “Well if God can forgive you, what are you, hanging onto it for?” Let it go! And that was useful.⁶³¹

This is stated a little more elegantly by Nigel, but in similar self-reflective, but more theological and psychological vein:

Because for a lot of them in order to live with themselves, the same as, same as me, we, sometimes make excuses for our behaviour because it helps us live with ourselves and avoids us having to take responsibility, and I find that when they get to that point, then, they’re well on the, road to then being able to hear that, God

⁶³⁰ 172-180.

⁶³¹ 1D580-584.

forgives them and, you know, there's a new life and God wants the best for them and He's got a plan for them. But we all have to come to that realisation in our lives, as I did and as you did I'm sure, that, you know, we've messed it up and, we can't do it on our own, so that's, the turning point for me I think.⁶³²

Here Nigel shows acceptance of the unredeemed person, but realises that it is when a person, like "ourselves" "take responsibility" in not excusing bad behaviour but accepting that "God forgives them", which leads to "new life... God ... got a plan for them". Nigel clearly accepts God's forgiveness as unconditional, but also suggests that a person needs to change in order that a redeemed life may take hold.

4.4.6 *Healing*

All the volunteers appreciate healing and recognise it as something that Christians are involved in. A minority are wary of the word "healing" in terms of their own experience or expression of faith. Nevertheless even this small sample of people produced a breadth of Christian understanding of God's healing rooted in further theological frameworks.

Linda, Ken and Mark are reluctant to use the word "healing" in terms of their own modus operandi. However, none of them are willing to deny it happened, quoting in the above order:

when we were at the Carol Service, someone was telling us about two, him and his friend that had been prayed for by, er, in the alpha group that had been healed and I get Tina's emails, you know, Tina

⁶³² N634-651.

that sees a lot of healing in their meetings, yeah but again just not something I pray for at Sycamore but. [Linda]⁶³³

Healing hasn't come into it. I'm very aware of God's grace but... I know God heals but I don't think I've got particular gifting in that sense. [Ken]⁶³⁴

I've seen, seen some healing of the mind, if you like, I could say that. [Mark]⁶³⁵

Ken is willing to concede that healing is perhaps to do with grace and perhaps it is a moot point, where does grace end and healing begin? Linda suggests that prayer is necessary for healing, whilst Mark is less willing to see healing, except "of the mind." "Discernment" is implied throughout in terms of healing, but none mentioned discernment directly.

Theological terms directly related to healing abounded. In order of the number of mentions, starting with prayer, Barbara Fiona and Nigel suggest that prayer is the start of healing,

you're praying for a drug, I mean a low, a certain person, a drug dealer from South London, who said to me "Don't worry Barbara, I've heard from the Lord on this." I said, "Oh have you?" He said, "Yeah." He said, "One spliff is okay, but everything in moderation!" [She and I laugh.] "Man" or something. You know what. "Okay, well I don't think you're quite at that point where we'll pray, let's just pray that God will give you the desire to, to give it up."⁶³⁶

With Fiona,

⁶³³ L1221-1229.

⁶³⁴ K631-632 and K732-733 respectively.

⁶³⁵ M930-934.

⁶³⁶ B266-272.

Miracles don't just come to you, you have to do it. So, it's like offering prayer for healing,⁶³⁷

For Nigel,

people have been healed of, you know, God suddenly healed, healed people of addictions. But we've seen people come in with, ulcers that they've had for 30 years that God has miraculously healed. People on crutches that, they've been able to throw away. People with toothaches that have just disappeared, and it taught me something, because I think as Christians and, and, and this well-known phrase, 'how are you?' We don't really want to know the answer, or that if somebody says, 'how are you?', 'well, I've got a headache, you know, you're, sometimes the immediate response would be, 'well, have you taken any paracetamol?' instead of saying, 'can I pray for you?'⁶³⁸

Forgiveness is seen as a route to healing by Christopher and Elizabeth, though Christopher remains reluctant to use "healing" or "wholeness" as he fears that they may be middle-class terms, loaded with middle-class expectation or indoctrination perhaps. Christopher also naturally moves on from sin and healing to working with that person to ensure they are able to remain in that healed state:

So I suppose with ex-offenders there, there's a link between offences and sin, not that what the world considers offence exactly matches perhaps - so I guess there is something about people who have done wrong, then choosing to do right, or cease to do wrong, and almost certain, not perfectly deciding but - making a better fist of it. Something about whole, wholesomeness and wholesomeness and healthiness, but I'm, reluctant to put into words, because it's not about imposing middle-class values, it's about people, figuring out

⁶³⁷ 1F686-688, fuller quote on next page.

⁶³⁸ N568-582.

what is right for them, - and giving them skills to achieve it. So, that doesn't assume that it's about somewhere nice to live and paid work, it's about finding some gifts and some passions that people have and setting them free to follow them, whatever that is, it could be artistic or -. ⁶³⁹

For Elizabeth, simply,

Healing, healing is very hard. But that goes with forgiveness, and things we've talked about before. ⁶⁴⁰

Miracles are not taken for granted, they needed to be worked at, though

Christopher is less reluctant to expect miracles than Fiona:

I mean we, so we're not on the whole challenging people to miraculous physical healing. ⁶⁴¹

Whilst for Fiona it is far more about seeing miracles as an antidote to evil:

Miracles don't just come to you, you have to do it. So, like, it's like offering prayer for healing, or, just, just people being saved is a, miracle in itself, but, just being aware of. To be involved with miracles you have to be aware, of evil, and, have the desire to hate evil. You want to get rid of it, you see it, and you see what it's doing to people, you see stealing and, lying and, deceiving and, just equalling death. And you hate it, and you see it, and you're able to see it, and you and you say, "No" to it, you know? It's, "What you're doing is not right." So just being able to see it, and, doing something about it. ⁶⁴²

Fiona is particularly ready to mention healing, as identified from the above quotes. She also talks of healing in terms of biblical proof, God's authority, evil, and wholeness.

⁶³⁹ 2C529-544.

⁶⁴⁰ 2E635-636.

⁶⁴¹ 2C490-491.

⁶⁴² 1F686-695.

I just look at that illness as, that's evil living inside that body, and that, I've got the authority to get rid of it. It has to go at my words, 'cause I've got, the authority of Jesus, so I command it to go [shouts], and I see them healed. And just being able to see, see a person separate from the evil? er, and, know that, that evil is defeated, and it has absolutely, no - leg to stand on, 'cause we've got Jesus and Jesus has defeated it and we've got authority.⁶⁴³

In terms of wholeness, Fiona quoted Isaiah 53 v4-5 as “for He was beaten for our [I// for our.], iniquities, and whipped for our... so we could be healed and made whole.”⁶⁴⁴

Healing is a gift, for George, “He [God], gives me gifts constantly. You know, He gives me a bit more healing.”⁶⁴⁵

Nigel comprehends healing in terms of changed lives, not just addressing a problem, moreover, Nigel states that he expects healings to take place away from church buildings, and in the wider community:

it's a real privilege to see God actually change lives in front of your eyes really and, I've seen that on so many occasions really, and I've seen more healings, in prison that I, ever have in the church, and I don't think that's er, we should be, surprised at that because, you know, and when I look through the New Testament I can find no occasion, probably only on one at the most, where Jesus actually healed people in a synagogue, he, he did it in the community.⁶⁴⁶

⁶⁴³ 1F538-545.

⁶⁴⁴ 1F772-786.

⁶⁴⁵ G886-887.

⁶⁴⁶ N305-310.

4.4.7 Transformation

In her first interview Fiona had contrasted the lack of change expected of church attenders with the transformation of the offenders she had worked with:

the only two churches that I've been to. er, is that - the goal is - salvation, which the goal is always salvation, but there's nothing after that. Is that, like - "You're going to get into heaven - because you believe in Jesus." But, there's no emphasis about, how much God wants to do in your life. Or there is, but it's just that I don't know: people's lives don't change after they become Christians a lot of the time. Because God wants so much for us, but, we don't let Him, so, that's why I read these books on Bill Johnson and the () centre, Kenneth Cope Ministries and stuff, because that's where I feel like - people's lives are different, and they're living out the Christian life because Jesus told us that he looks in a certain way that a Christian life is doing certain things, it's not just saying, "I'm saved and I'm going to get into heaven! So I'll just go to church and Sunday worship, and then go home and live my life the way I normally do. The way I did before," and not letting God transform your life.⁶⁴⁷

Yet, especially from the testimonies of those who became Christian in prison, she concludes that it is forgiveness which transforms lives:

When they tell me, what they used to be like, to what they are now. And, the way that forgiveness has transformed their lives, that's really powerful.⁶⁴⁸

For Nigel, transformation is almost a miracle in an environment such as a prison:

I've seen many guys lives transformed because, they've, got to the point in their lives when they've been able to forgive. I find that, you

⁶⁴⁷ 1F475-489.

⁶⁴⁸ 1F730-733.

would know better than I but prisons, especially male prisons, can be, quite a macho, er testosterone sort of fuelled sort of environment, and I find that especially in a young offenders prison like HMP Vine, even probably more so than er HMP Nectarine, and when we do the Sycamore Tree course and we talk about forgiveness, there's almost an immediate, well, I could never forgive this and that. But as God's (call?) you know, and the Holy Spirit starts to work, for a lot of the guys they do find in, their heart that they can, forgive, some of the hurts of the past, and, and I say that because I have heard, although I don't ask them, I've heard enough stories in prison now, and if I'm honest enough to know that if I'd, if I'd been part of their story, I'd almost certainly be in prison with them.

In other words I'm not excusing the fact they're there but a lot of the hurts and the rejection that they've suffered in their lives has been a, contributing factor to them ending up where they are and so, forgiveness for them is a big issue. But I know that in Christ, forgiveness can be releasing and the opposite fact, and the opposite to that of course it can, it can just bind you up and a lot of guys are banged up because, of un-forgiveness. And so if you can get to a point where they can either accept forgiveness or they can, forgive others, it can be, a life changing moment, and I've seen that happen on a lot of occasions, but, it's not easy within that environment.⁶⁴⁹

This state of transformation springs from forgiveness, as the antidote to the issues of "un-forgiveness", to which the prisoners are subject, for un-forgiveness is the reason "a lot of guys are banged up". Nigel is also sensitive to the hurts and rejections many prisoners suffer, and from which, in his opinion, offences sprung. Nigel says, "I know that in Christ, forgiveness can be releasing...".

How then are Christ and God at work for the volunteer?

⁶⁴⁹ N490-519.

4.4.8 *Grace*

Only one volunteer (Alison) did not use the word “grace” at all, despite my mention of it.⁶⁵⁰ This is surprising, as her comments on “love” (see above) showed an understanding of grace. No one gave a specific definition of grace, yet they speak of God’s work of grace, linking both the work of God in the lives of the poor and underprivileged whom they support, and their own lives.⁶⁵¹ The humility of the volunteers is that they mention the work of grace in their lives as naturally as the work of grace in the ex-offenders or “unlikely people” as Christopher put it.⁶⁵² For Christopher, if God works in the unlikely people “I think we should be a bit the same”.⁶⁵³ Barbara amplified this, saying,

And it’s all about the grace of God. Because, the people I meet are not “good people,” but they’re strong Christians. And I’ve had to, put those two things together [slight laugh] and then obviously looking through the Bible: David was a murderer; Joseph spent time in prison. A lot, of the, reformers were in prison, it’s not - Paul spent loads of time in prison. The prison was a very, common, common thing, in the Bible. And murder and pillage, and all of this, and God, wiping out nations, and... So, now so I think I’ve grown up to a Christian church and that, and I thought, I thought it was about being good really. And then how can you, have a murderer who is, a Charismatic Christian? Who obviously hasn’t been good. So I’ve had to sort of, re-evaluated, which has been fascinating. My whole concept of what being a Christian is about. Yeah. And realise that it’s not about being good. Which is, I think has been a major thing with my, with my, belief system.⁶⁵⁴

⁶⁵⁰ 1A685, Appendix 9, and notes on Grace, Appendix 10.

⁶⁵¹ Appendix 10, Grace.

⁶⁵² 144, 2C408-413.

⁶⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵⁴ 2B199-217.

Here, Barbara identifies from volunteering, that the Bible is not “about being good” but about being a “strong Christian”, something in contrast to what she understood her local parish church to teach - that being a strong Christian depended upon being a good person. For others, grace abounds and “is transforming” and “lavish”.⁶⁵⁵

Fiona is a little more circumspect, though not contradictory, she feels that people who “hit rock bottom” are “hungry for God” unlike Christians in the pew. She further shared the compassionate statements that offenders’ sins may be framed in terms of their reactions to an abusive or disadvantaged past:

the biggest things that I’ve learnt that I think is that Jesus really did come to, eat with the sinners and the tax collectors and the prostitutes. And, everybody needs, God’s grace. But huge. But I can see now that, self-righteousness in, people who think that they’re okay, and how people who, have hit rock-bottom, they just, so hungry for God. An I can. It just makes sense why Jesus said the things that he said. About, the Pharisees and then, “I’ve come, to, be with the people who know that they, are sinners, who know that they’ve done wrong,” you know. Who don’t think that they’re, perfect. That can accept that they need help. And it’s like you see the impossible made possible, because, without, knowing the, power of God, you would look at, a murderer in prison, who’s, come from, the worst background possible, he’s been abused as a child. Full of anger and rage, and just hating everybody and hating life. You would never think that they could be transformed into a peaceful person who, who’d feel bad about what they’d done, and forgive the people that have miss-treated them. You know. Just

⁶⁵⁵ 2F1120-1131 and 2C232-239.

seeing that makes you think wow! God is, you just see the power of God, that you wouldn't necessarily see in your own life.⁶⁵⁶

Two volunteers warn that grace may be blocked or cause problems for the Christian. George explains, with respect to an earlier experience in a "rule based" church:

I left. I refused to go back then. There's no grace there: that's what I see. And it was all about, "No no no. You've got to do things certain ways." An I thought, "That's not for me." Rules and regulations are breakable, that's just my, that was my nature, and it's still now my nature, but I'm learn, I, I've learned to come under authority now.⁶⁵⁷

"Rules and regulations" for George, show an absence of grace: "There's no grace there". George struggles with his own criticism of another church and perhaps shows his own grace by owning his personal struggle as he has "learned to come under authority now."

Christopher identifies what Fiona and Linda may have suggested, that grace offered may clash with other demands on the person:⁶⁵⁸

So yes, I think a real - I guess I wrestle a bit with - judgement and boundaries, and, mercy and grace. So part of it is definitely knowing how much God and Jesus have done for us, so how-how dare we withhold from other people. But particularly in setting up the houses and the business, we're gonna have to have rules, and we're gonna have to have boundaries. And how, how do you. And Sometimes the more we enforce the boundary, the better the project

⁶⁵⁶ 1F434-452.

⁶⁵⁷ G373-378.

⁶⁵⁸ Appendix 10, Grace.

will run. And how do you mix that, how do you balance that with grace and mercy?⁶⁵⁹

... Well that: maybe that it's - that some people have done obvious evil, but we are all sinners and we have to have grace for everyone; and yet, we've got to have safeguards that prevent - continuing evil, or - you know, that some people in the house drink and lead others astray, who are trying to, not drink.⁶⁶⁰

Grace then, may conflict with the human need to impose boundaries and safeguarding – or is this about understanding that grace does not negate such concerns, but could be an important component of such ethical thinking?

So far I have considered responses to the espoused theological voice of the Christian volunteer, after Cameron.⁶⁶¹ It may be instructive to consider if there is any difference to the volunteers' "normative" theological aspect, that is, according to Cameron, aspects of faith learnt from the creeds, scriptures, official church teaching or liturgies.⁶⁶²

4.5 Aspects of faith deemed “normative”

As a contrast to all the above espoused theological words, I asked about God, the Trinity, and members of it, as these would be well know aspects of Christian faith, which might be described as “normative” in Cameron's schema.⁶⁶³

⁶⁵⁹ 1C157-165.

⁶⁶⁰ 1C477-481.

⁶⁶¹ Cameron, *Talking About God*, 54, discussed in 98-100.

⁶⁶² Ibid.

⁶⁶³ Ibid.

4.5.1 *God, or is it Father, Son or Holy Spirit?*

“God” is overwhelmingly the one to whom the volunteers ascribed and noted as their guide and inspiration.⁶⁶⁴ This frequent use of “God” might suggest that the volunteers are more theist than Christian, despite a bold and frequent assertion of each volunteer that their work is the result of, or at least centred upon, their Christian faith.⁶⁶⁵ Defining God as Trinity is simply not done by the volunteers without a prompt by the researcher. Even then six of the participants avoid any response. Of the seven who responded, four said that they did not yet have a full understanding of the Trinity or were still working through it.⁶⁶⁶ Two offered no role for the Holy Spirit in regards to how they saw the Trinity.⁶⁶⁷ Alison gives the enigmatic reply,

How do I visualise it? Well sometimes I feel I always have to include them when I pray as three, and not leave one out. I still tend to think of God at the top, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. But I’ve no trouble connecting them all.⁶⁶⁸

Christopher offers a pithy summary, though referred to the Holy Spirit as either “stuff”, or if that “stuff” is God’s gifts, that which plants God’s gifts in people is the Spirit:

Well it relates to the Father sending the Son, and how Jesus behaved on earth. And I think, a new emphasis on, God has planted stuff in everyone. And wanting to see what the Spirit has put in people drawn out.⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁴ See Appendix 9, where “God” is the second most common word used after “church”.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid., where church, faith and Christianity are in the top five words used.

⁶⁶⁶ ACDEFGN and AEEFG respectively.

⁶⁶⁷ DN.

⁶⁶⁸ 1B597-600.

⁶⁶⁹ 1C453-455.

As discussion continues, the words, Father, Jesus, Christ, and Holy Spirit, might give some insight into the volunteers' view of God. Nevertheless, the default position is to talk mainly of "God", something into which Fiona gave unwitting insight, when she added after giving her explanation of the Trinity: "I would just have clumped it all together as 'God.'"⁶⁷⁰ However, when "Jesus", "Christ", "Holy Spirit" or "Father" are used, they have particular significance to the volunteers who use them, though "Trinity" remained insignificant, as discussed above.

4.5.2 *Christ, Jesus or Son*

The word "Christ" averages just over two per interview, with five volunteers not using the term at all.⁶⁷¹ Even "Jesus" is not used at all by one volunteer (Linda), though is otherwise commonly used, with George being the highest user of the name.⁶⁷² The interview questions relate directly to the word "Son" as in Son of God, but largely the participants resisted using the term: Christopher, Deborah and Jennifer use it once, Nigel twice and Elizabeth four times. Linda, did not mention Jesus, "the Son", or "Christ" at all during the interview, despite two attempts by me to ask about the Trinity (another word she did not mention) and two mentions by me of "Jesus". Even so, Linda is insistent that one's Christian faith should permeate all that one does, not just volunteering or church, but in the workplace and anywhere.⁶⁷³

⁶⁷⁰ 2F1388.

⁶⁷¹ ABJLM, see also, Appendix 9.

⁶⁷² Appendix 9.

⁶⁷³ See earlier quote 148 (L1256-1258).

When not speaking of “God”, the majority of the remaining volunteers mainly talk of “Jesus”, though Elizabeth is unusually as likely to speak of “God’s Son”, and speaks more of “Christ”.⁶⁷⁴ Where “Christ” or “Son” is mentioned, it is mainly in terms of Christ as a spiritual or doctrinal idea, with “Jesus” then used to denote the biblical Jesus, or the one who was or is present. Nigel most clearly illustrates this, first with an abstract idea of faith, the imitation of Christ, and then he refers to the biblical Jesus being the one who might walk the earth, whom we should extrapolate from the Bible and emulate:

We’re told to go and imitate Christ, aren’t we, and I just sense that if, Jesus was walking the earth in 2016, he’d be going into prison and he’d be going to the homeless and he’d be going to the addicts, and we’re told, and yet society in a way shuns those, you know.⁶⁷⁵

Nigel is most likely to speak of “Christ”, whilst George and Fiona speak of “Jesus” with a higher number of references to “Christ” than other volunteers. Nigel’s “Christ” is what might be described as a “spiritual presence”, or perhaps faithful observation,⁶⁷⁶ whilst Nigel’s “Jesus” is related to practical or biblical actions.⁶⁷⁷ Similarly, Elizabeth’s use of “Christ” and “Son” are connected to a doctrinal or spiritual sense of Jesus Christ, with one exception,⁶⁷⁸ whilst her

⁶⁷⁴ Appendix 9.

⁶⁷⁵ N394-397.

⁶⁷⁶ The uses are: “the sweet aroma of Christ” (N765; 1079/1080; 1081) “Come to Christ” (N758; N771; N1103) “through/in Christ” (N907; 797), or to have faith in or follow or imitate (N394; N406; N407; N797).

⁶⁷⁷ The uses for Jesus are: “Jesus said” (N164) “Jesus healed” (N310) “if it wasn’t for Jesus, we’d all be lost” (N382) “if Jesus were walking the earth in 2016” (N395), where Jesus would go (N405), “sent Jesus to reconcile” (N796) , “wish you knew Jesus” (N829), or “I just believe Jesus is the way...” (N834).

⁶⁷⁸ The uses for “Christ” are: “God comes through...Christ on earth” (1E688); “Christ being resurrected” (1E689); “Christ comes with us through the Holy Spirit” (1E696) and “meaning of Christ in the Trinity” (1E 741. The uses of “Son” as in “Son of God” are: “Your Son came down for me” (twice, 1E129); “God, Father Son and ... Holy Spirit” (1E950); “one true way... Christ the Lord” (2E552), though in the second interview, when she uses “Christ” twice and “Jesus” once, she refers to Christ anomalously as the biblical Christ, with, “Christ didn’t just go round preaching, he did things,” (2E773-774).

“Jesus” is related to biblical references.⁶⁷⁹ In the first interview with Fiona, almost every use is “Jesus”, with the exception of the phrase “bride of Christ.”⁶⁸⁰ However by the second interview her use of “Christ” and “Jesus” has become more nuanced, and similar to that of Nigel. This may have been due to her moving churches between interviews, and the way her new faith community used the words “Christ” and “Jesus”. Other volunteers who make mention of “Christ” follow the same schema as above, Christ as doctrinal or spiritual, Jesus as biblical or “present”. George talks of “Jesus Christ” as “present” and of people knowing him “pre Christ”, whereas Ken’s only mention is in terms of “the anti-Christ”.⁶⁸¹ Deborah speaks mainly of “Jesus”, yet, in one stanza she speaks of “Christ” in terms of the one to be honoured:

Whereas it’s Christ we’re honouring. The main thing is that, we, we have to actually do something, we can’t just sit there and expect, Christ to push us along every step of the way. He gave us instructions quite clearly for a reason, and, we have to get on with it. I recognise that not everybody’s going to be getting up and going into the local prison, but I mean [sighs] a friend of mine who came in first of all with me, [name given, “Ab”], she was way over 70 when she started and should have been too old for starting that kind of ministry but she threw herself into it - because she felt inspired.⁶⁸²

“Christ” might be the spiritual presence of Jesus. The references to, “instructions quite clearly” implied biblical injunctions, yet this leads to a friend being “inspired”.⁶⁸³

⁶⁷⁹ The uses for “Jesus” are: “Jesus walking” (1E103 and 107); “Jesus would always talk to...” (1E498) and “how Jesus behaved with other people” (2E303).

⁶⁸⁰ 2F497.

⁶⁸¹ G440, G554 and K772.

⁶⁸² 2D168-199.

⁶⁸³ 2D199.

4.5.3 *Holy Spirit*

The term “Holy Spirit” is infrequently used. Christopher does not use the term in that two word form at all. In common with all but Linda and Mark, Christopher used “Spirit” and “Spiritual” referring to the Holy Spirit, generally. Mark neither uses “Holy Spirit” nor “Spirit/spiritual”, even after prompts from me.⁶⁸⁴ The maximum use of “Holy Spirit” is by Barbara in her second interview.⁶⁸⁵

Mention of the Holy Spirit is even less often than that of “Jesus”.⁶⁸⁶ For the volunteers who did talk of the Holy Spirit, most (nine) refer to the Holy Spirit as inspiration, that part of God’s spirit either in them, or equipping or encouraging them.⁶⁸⁷ A typical example of this is from Linda:

So I think it’s different for different people but, so I think if you’re particularly interested in it, then God has given you that interest, and the Holy Spirit hopefully is sustaining you and filling you up to keep going and energy and inspiring you and your relationship with God, as well as hopefully encouragement from other people and praying with other people, not being like a lone ranger. So I guess a combination of you and God and other people keep you going but, but you have to have that interest to begin with in a particular area I think. [laughs]...

The outworking of it. I think, you see the Holy Spirit working in lots of different ways. So when I went into the HMP Pear chapel service, if you’re just talking about kind of feelings that you get, obviously I don’t often experience the Holy Spirit in that way like it was a

⁶⁸⁴ M790-804.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁶ Appendix 9.

⁶⁸⁷ For their particular placement of quotes: 1A547-606; 1B374-375; 1C453-455; 2D921-923; 1E225; 1E692-707; 2F1427-1434; J1132-1145; K295-296; K681-703; L492-496; and L519-529.

feeling, but in the chapel services at HMP Pear I did like really, really strongly, and the Holy Spirit I think you see at work because you're praying to see change in people's lives and they're not just doing a course and just, you know, pat answers but actually learning and changing. So you'd see it in that way and then in yourself, sometimes obviously you're praying for maybe more boldness to do things you wouldn't normally do or for, wisdom in more particular, words in conversations to give to people⁶⁸⁸

For Linda, it is the Holy Spirit who is responsible for affirming an interest that God gives. God gives the passion, but Linda considers the Holy Spirit responsible for maintaining the interest, giving further inspiration and then affirmation to maintain a relationship with God and others. There is an acknowledgement of the relational form and desire of the Godhead, which encourages relationships with other Christians, perhaps. The dichotomy between a person of the Trinity and the general term "God" is only pursued through the idea of the Holy Spirit. Linda feels that the Holy Spirit works "in lots of different ways" and explains it as a "kind of feeling that you get" even though it is not a common experience for her.⁶⁸⁹ She observes both this feeling and the way in which praying may lead to change in people's lives, as being the result of the Holy Spirit's work.⁶⁹⁰ In this way Linda clearly proclaims many of the aspects of the Holy Spirit which the other volunteers are referring to, as suggested above. Somewhat later in the interview, Linda was asked about her view of healing. She accepted that it happens through the ministry of Christians as a result of prayer (and from her comments quoted above, through the Holy

⁶⁸⁸ L492-531.

⁶⁸⁹ L519-521.

⁶⁹⁰ L519-525.

Spirit), but declares that it is “just not something I pray for at Sycamore”.⁶⁹¹ In terms of communication of the Holy Spirit, Linda explains this in terms of “feeling”. Others might refer to communication as some form of “talking” as noted in the next paragraph.

The volunteers indicated that the Holy Spirit is a distinctive aspect of the Godhead to be discovered, or have revealed to themselves or to others. Fiona speaks of a friend whom she considered not to understand the Holy Spirit, so she prayed for her healing for a physical ailment (irritated larger intestine), and suggested that such knowledge of the Holy Spirit meant that healing could flow.⁶⁹² Three speak of discovering the Holy Spirit “late” or “later” in life (Alison, Deborah and Ken).⁶⁹³ Five (Fiona, Jennifer, George, Linda and Nigel) explain the Holy Spirit as dwelling within one.⁶⁹⁴ Three (Barbara, Deborah and Ken) describe the Holy Spirit as being a presence.⁶⁹⁵ Two (Fiona and Ken) refer to healing in terms of the Holy Spirit; two (Barbara and Deborah) that the Holy Spirit speaks to people; two (Barbara and Nigel) that the Holy Spirit is an agent of conversion to faith.⁶⁹⁶ One (Fiona) sees the Holy Spirit as an experience of God – experience is important to Fiona.⁶⁹⁷ One (George) sees the Holy Spirit as a gift one has to share (or give away), “for the good of humanity”.⁶⁹⁸ Barbara is

⁶⁹¹ L1224, in the passage, L1221-1229 page 181-182.

⁶⁹² 1F291-296.

⁶⁹³ 1A547-567; 1D388-395; and K445-449.

⁶⁹⁴ 2F1001-1002 and 2F1429-1430; J114; G260-265 & 766-767; L493-494; N732-734.

⁶⁹⁵ 1B279-299; 1B629-638; 2D920-923, and K280-301.

⁶⁹⁶ Respectively, 1F350-351, K716, 1B574-575, 2D1323-1331, 1B395, N995-996 and N1003.

⁶⁹⁷ 1F461, 1F571, 2F1380-1384, and earlier Fiona uses experience to “provide evidence” of biblical truth, 137.

⁶⁹⁸ G229, G766-767.

emphatic that the Holy Spirit is at least as present and active outside the church as it is within it.⁶⁹⁹

4.5.4 *Father*

The descriptor “Father” is used by me, but not all of the volunteers; six do not use it at all, whilst George uses it the most (in addition to references to earthly fathers).⁷⁰⁰ Others struggled with God the Father. Deborah only mentions God the Father once, in terms of “sometimes pray to the Father”.⁷⁰¹ Elizabeth:

certainly went through a stage where I, wanted God to be God my parent. I didn’t want God to be tarnished with, earthly, gender.”⁷⁰²

A sentiment repeated in her second interview.⁷⁰³

In her first interview, Fiona states “I don’t understand the Father really”.⁷⁰⁴

However, Fiona continues to say that she understands Jesus as God:

And that the Holy Spirit, is one: leads you to Jesus who leads you to the Father, is God, [slight laugh] He had to help us and comfort us and direct us and guide us. But then Jesus does that as well,⁷⁰⁵

In her second interview she explains that she has received some teaching on the Father and quoted the book *The Father Heart of God*, probably meaning that by Floyd McClung, and had also read a book by Mark Stibbe.⁷⁰⁶ She later added that the Father has adopted us to sit at His right hand.⁷⁰⁷ Jennifer’s only use of Father is as a creedal statement to confirm the faith of others who “believe in

⁶⁹⁹ 1B280 and 1B632-634 respectively.

⁷⁰⁰ ABCKLM and G851-856.

⁷⁰¹ 1D449-450.

⁷⁰² 1E952-954.

⁷⁰³ 2E669-670.

⁷⁰⁴ 1F511.

⁷⁰⁵ 1F514-516.

⁷⁰⁶ 2F243-245

⁷⁰⁷ 2F954-955.

Jesus, the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.”⁷⁰⁸ Two volunteers reflect upon our heavenly Father as an example. Nigel perhaps sees fatherhood as a good example, with God the Father creating him “in my mother’s womb”.⁷⁰⁹ However, George, who had had a troubled relationship with his father from childhood, has found God as his Father now, with “Father” being mentioned as God’s name in his conversation about prayer at least nine times.⁷¹⁰ George prayed for the Father to speak through him when doing things such as filling out a job application for example, at other times he simply spoke to “Father” in a familiar way whilst asking for guidance or favours.⁷¹¹

As noted above, God as Trinity receives very few mentions by any of the volunteers, whilst Father, Son, Jesus, Christ, and Holy Spirit combined prove to be less common than the general term “God.”⁷¹² “God” is used an average of 47 times against a grand total of 22 for any other aspect of the Godhead, including “Father, Son, Jesus, Christ, Holy Spirit and Trinity”, even though these terms are frequently used more by the interviewer than those interviewed.⁷¹³ Nevertheless, “God” is very much spoken of as the purpose and the guiding power behind the volunteering, and of many of the actions and purposes of this ministry.

⁷⁰⁸ J1627-1628.

⁷⁰⁹ N794-799.

⁷¹⁰ G155-159, then G625; G637; G643; G845; G849; G1061; G1078; G1085; G1095.

⁷¹¹ G582, G636-644, G1078-1081.

⁷¹² Appendix 9.

⁷¹³ Ibid.

4.6 Brief summary of data

The volunteers are only too pleased to share their thoughts on what their volunteering means for them; it is as if they have been waiting for someone to ask. This is evidenced from their eagerness to express their thoughts, and the unsolicited response that they enjoyed the experience at the end of most interviews.

Table 3 on page 164 particularly highlights common feelings about faith issues and the benefit which volunteering gives to the growth of such faith. All volunteers share a sense of excitement about their work, it is as if volunteering is what their Christian lives have been leading up to and it strengthens their espoused theological views.⁷¹⁴ Their volunteering is done with a sense of God's guidance and they often express their awareness of God as an insightful presence, accessible by prayer or reflection. Most access not only the Bible, but other Christian literature or websites for further guidance.

The volunteers present and defend a strong theological viewpoint born of their commitment and engagement with those beyond their local church membership and culture. Furthermore, the volunteers desire to respond to the needs of the world (or their clients) but found the responses available from their local churches to be inadequate. Far from being theologically naïve, in the field in which they work, the volunteers display a search for the theological meaning which goes beyond that which their churches are apparently willing or able to offer. However this commitment and search for good theology is at variance

⁷¹⁴ See discussion of Cameron's Theology in four voices, 98-100.

with ordinary theology discussion and research to date, and it is to this we will now turn.

5 FAITH, THEOLOGY AND INTENTIONAL CHRISTIAN VOLUNTEERING

Overwhelmingly, faith increases where it is applied to the work of the ordinary Christian volunteer. They are likely to need this increase in faith in order to operate in the difficult or stressful situations which arise when supporting the vulnerable and/or offenders. I have therefore trusted the participants' abilities to self-reflect over time, so that when asked, they were able to present meaningful comments. The fact that each participant shared that the faith that they needed to practice their Christian vocation had developed as a result of their volunteering was noteworthy and affirmed my trust. This study has been small in comparison to many, yet, there was a consistency of theological response from a small, but varied cohort, taken from a variety of churches in a large Anglican Diocese, and in two voluntary areas.⁷¹⁵ The participants were from a variety of churches ranging from small village churches, to large city churches, spread over one large Diocese, yet they shared consistency in this regard.⁷¹⁶ This study suggests that ordinary Christian theology can be found when active and intentional Christian work is performed in cultures away from the local church, by a researcher who has some knowledge of the areas in which such ordinary Christians perform their ministries.

In attempting to listen to the voice of the ordinary Christian volunteer, there will be times when there may have been a danger of co-constructing the narrative, due to my approach, even despite the explanations and clarification of the

⁷¹⁵ Table 1, 113.

⁷¹⁶ Ibid.

approach in the methodology chapter.⁷¹⁷ There were two occasions where my role as a priest in the CofE, or at least a Christian with theological understanding, became an obvious intrusion to the research interview. Barbara wanted a response from me after I asked about any scriptural references, she said, “Please don’t quote that verse to me.” I playfully responded, “What verse is that?”⁷¹⁸ I believe in the end this response simply disarmed the “person of authority” asking and may have affirmed her as someone who knew what she was saying in her own right, but it shows sensitivity to me as an authority. Similarly Elizabeth also thought that I might have an answer to her questions about prayer, but partly hesitated, saying, “I’d almost ask you this”.⁷¹⁹ I did not rise to the question, but it shows a partial deference, unfortunately, and perhaps the power dynamic that can occur in the interview process.⁷²⁰ During an interview with Fiona, I unintentionally made a comment which may have shown some sort of judgement, a possible co-construction, when she said, “No” to being brought up as a Christian, even though she had explained how her father had tried to ensure she went to church. I interrupted her flow, saying, “That’s interesting”, but her reply continued after a “Yeah”.⁷²¹ Due to limits on time, I was aware that I may have pushed ahead a little faster than the respondents. For example, I asked Christopher about any “particular teachings or references”, to which he replied, “Ah! I think that may come later, but yes...”⁷²² The pressure of having to use the time well during interviews can perhaps lead to hurrying the

⁷¹⁷ 79-118.

⁷¹⁸ 137-138, 1B259-266.

⁷¹⁹ 166-167 1E555-560.

⁷²⁰ See Chapter 3, Methodology, 85-88, 89-96 and 100-105, also Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, 409-426.

⁷²¹ *Ibid.*

⁷²² 146, 1F147-148.

participant, though Christopher recovered well, so judgement is required here. Christopher, like other respondents did not simply accept what I reflected back, when I interpreted that I thought he was saying that practice and theology were difficult to untangle, he responded that practice “probably colours what I get out of Scripture”, which was a helpful corrective.⁷²³

In looking to the responses of the volunteers interviewed, it became clear that they had a basic grasp of what faith words meant in a broadly theological or faith way, probably as a result of local church teaching and worship.⁷²⁴ It was when they faced the challenges of putting their faith into practice, by engaging with those beyond their church congregations, that they were challenged to change and/or expand their original theological positions.

Astley hoped that the study of the ordinary Christian would reveal an ordinary theology which might benefit and augment academic theology.⁷²⁵ However, neither he nor those he championed or worked with appear to have found the depth of theological statements that I have found. Clearly the theology of each participant in my study might be challenged, or found to be derived from ideas that could be improved by the application of academic study or findings, but they would generally welcome that. Nevertheless, as a body, the volunteers were engaging with people in the wider community beyond the church community, in a developed way that made sense to both the volunteer and their interlocutors.

⁷²³ 163, 1C514-523.

⁷²⁴ See list of faith words in Table 3 164.

⁷²⁵ 64-68 and Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, viii, 34 and 154-162.

Their volunteering, by its intentional Christian nature changes and develops ordinary theology as volunteers think more deeply and practically about the way their faith affects who they are and what they can do. There is an opportunity here to feed back to both their local church and the academy observations and questions of theological significance drawn from the wealth of these personal reflections and responses gleaned from the data of the previous chapter. Other studies reviewed in chapters 2 and 3 will also be considered, whilst there may be areas of my study which may add to the findings of the other studies.

In recent years Astley has highlighted other researchers whose responses may be considered as part of the ordinary theology approach and published their work in *Exploring Ordinary Theology*. Further, Astley has worked with Christie in researching “ordinary Christology”, whilst Village has expressly used Astley’s ordinary theology to research “ordinary hermeneutics”.⁷²⁶ The Bible was very important to the participants of my research. I therefore begin with analysing their comments on the Bible relating to ordinary Christians, but in particular to the work of Christie and Village. I then pursue the ordinary Christian volunteers’ responses to other aspects of faith showcased in the previous chapter which also may have a particular contribution to make to ordinary theology.⁷²⁷ I do this by comparing my analysis with the conclusions of other researchers of similar volunteers and in particular, research highlighted by Astley and Francis in their book *Exploring Ordinary Theology*.

⁷²⁶ Astley and Christie, *Taking Ordinary Theology Seriously*, also Village, *The Bible and Lay people: An Empirical Approach to Ordinary Hermeneutics*.

⁷²⁷ See Chapter 2.

Finally, in terms of analysis, these active ordinary Christian volunteers of my study spoke passionately about their vocations and of their need of support from their local churches (in terms of theological, prayerful and financial support) and of their continuing support of their local church (in its life and mission). Studies reviewed in *Chapter 2* have explored historical socio-political influences upon faith volunteering, and of course these may affect how the Christian volunteers of this study are regarded by others in their local churches. I hope to reflect on these influences where appropriate. First, I will explore the place of faith in the volunteers' responses, and I will finish this chapter by exploring how this study may help the local church engage constructively with ordinary Christian volunteers within its congregation, and what mutual benefits might be gained.

5.1 The Bible and the ordinary Christian volunteer

The Christian volunteers in this study, as members of various churches, all held the Bible in high regard and generally referred to the Bible often for worship, affirmation and guidance. How they interpreted the Bible was nuanced, and individual. However, this only contributed to affirming that each participant had a considered theological approach, perhaps influenced by the tradition of the particular church to which they belonged.

Elizabeth spoke of how her biblical understanding led to readings which were “jolly tough”, but provided “layers of meaning” discerned in a God revealed through events “shared out in daily things.”⁷²⁸ Her discernment was palpable in the way she described the Bible's message to her as “effective” and tested by

⁷²⁸ 134-135.

her in her life and practice through “a positive feedback or “positive circle” as she put it.⁷²⁹ This approach could have been spoken of by any of the volunteers interviewed, as they all displayed a cogent and meaningful engagement with the Bible, which nourished their work and daily lives; in one way or another the Bible was a direct vehicle for God’s word.

In his review of Bible study groups in *Sharing the Journey*, Wuthnow suggests that such groups have “domesticated” the Bible by reading it to affirm their pre-existing beliefs by sharing examples where “I loved my neighbour yesterday, and it made me happy or that I was meek to my boss and he was nice in return”.⁷³⁰ Yet Wuthnow believes that reading the Bible is not the main concern of such groups, as “The weekly Bible study may have lasted two hours, but only fifteen minutes of the time was devoted to studying the Bible.”⁷³¹ More recently Christie, who also could not find “engaged reading” from the majority of Christians who claimed to be following Jesus example, states “Regardless of what scripture and tradition teach, we will not let Jesus Christ be anything more or less than we think we need for our salvation.”⁷³² Such views do not correspond with the reading of the Bible for practical use in the mission field of the Christian volunteers interviewed, where such reading was “tough”, requiring discernment and feedback from the practical outworking of ideas gleaned. I consider the problem to be that in these examples, the study groups of Wuthnow

⁷²⁹ Ibid.

⁷³⁰ Robert Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey: Support Groups and America’s New Quest for Community* (USA: The Free Press, 1996), 282.

⁷³¹ Wuthnow *Sharing the Journey*, 243.

⁷³² Background from: Ann Christie, “Jesus as exemplar” in *Exploring Ordinary Theology: Everyday Christian Believing and the Church*, editors Jeff Astley and Leslie Francis (Great Britain: Ashgate, 2013), 80. Quotation from: Ann Christie, “Who Do You Say I Am? Answers from the Pews,” *The Journal of Adult Theological Education* 4.2 (2007): 193.

and Christie were ones remote from practical application. The members of groups they studied met to affirm each other using biblical text, not to probe or be discerned by lived experience, but to affirm their corporate beliefs “in some vague way”.⁷³³

In her book *Visions of Charity*, Rebecca Allahyari shows a different approach to the Christian who volunteers for projects beyond their church congregations. However, her questions did not investigate an espoused faith, but sought to explore the moral purpose of such acts: this was something that her volunteers did not appear to have thought about.⁷³⁴ Allahyari’s research highlighted only the volunteer’s relationship to the scriptures set by the researcher. This was despite the use of scriptures which were used by the organisations running the volunteers, allied to printings of the “Catholic Worker Newspaper” and by the Salvation Army who operated the “Shelter Services Center [sic]”.⁷³⁵ “The Golden Rule” was considered theologically by one volunteer as a quote: “Do for my brother and you are doing for me”, without reference to a precise biblical quote, but Matthew 25 vs35-40, particularly v40 might be assumed.⁷³⁶ Allahyari noted that participants offered only weak examples of theological or ecclesial engagement, though their work ethic was Christian based.⁷³⁷ However, one participant in her work, “Tony”, provided a rich exposition of the theology of the emptiness of sin and the need for “leaven” as a “conversion [which] takes time”.⁷³⁸ This last example suggested that Allahyari had found one volunteer

⁷³³ Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey*, 279.

⁷³⁴ Rebecca Allahyari, *Visions of Charity: Volunteer workers and Moral Community* (United States of America: University of California Press, 2000), 130-134.

⁷³⁵ *Ibid.*, 35-104.

⁷³⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁷³⁷ *Ibid.*, 71-73 and 103.

⁷³⁸ *Ibid.*, 131-134.

who had engaged thoughtfully with his continuing need for “conversion”, as the statement had theological loading, but there was little comment on the weight of this theology. Allahyari was looking for issues of “moral selving”, which may have been relevant to the church, but not directly relevant to the work of the Christian volunteer in their particular contexts, so it is likely that her volunteers had not thought about such issues.⁷³⁹ It is no surprise then that she could not find evidence for “moral selving” in her cohort.

In my study Elizabeth struggled with understanding the Bible in terms of her ministry to the deaf and had spent time trying to find relevant passages for her work. Whereas Wuthnow, for example, made an observation about the relevance of biblical understanding that he counted as important, and sought that in his volunteers, regardless of how they might be looking for relevance in their Bibles. There was then a mismatch. For example, in one study Wuthnow criticised his participants for not fully comprehending the taught theology of their church minister.⁷⁴⁰ Maybe this was more a problem of teaching, such as the minister not preaching on topics that were relevant to the participants.

Soteriology, baptism and communion may have been far more important to the work of a minister than the laity, or there may have been insufficient experience or need for these participants to engage to any depth with such ideas.⁷⁴¹

Similarly, Wuthnow speculated that lay Christian Americans’ “sense of God’s presence is subjectively comforting”, which may only be part of the reason for his being unable to extract meaningful comprehension of readings he thought

⁷³⁹ Ibid., 107-200.

⁷⁴⁰ Wuthnow, *“Restructuring of American Religion”*, 300.

⁷⁴¹ Ibid.

were important.⁷⁴² For example, in my study, Elizabeth's struggles above showed that she put other people at the forefront of her theological struggles, and looked to scripture (and sometimes other Christian colleagues) so she might respond to her client's problems, not her own comfort and so offer a richer theological interpretation.⁷⁴³

On one hand, once launched into volunteering by the suggestion of their local church, the volunteers in my study were effectively "left to it" in terms of developing their own theological understanding and tools to support their work.⁷⁴⁴ Without direct church support, this resulted in the volunteers developing their own theology, which, at best, was based on the one reliable source they had, the Bible. For example one sub-cohort (Deborah, Fiona and George) read the Bible as the direct word of God, whilst maintaining a watching brief on the veracity of such a powerful statement, based not simply on their interpretation of the Bible as truth, but upon evidence of their consequent experience.⁷⁴⁵ Part of this discernment included being members of a fellowship, which could be a congregation, other volunteers and, for George, NA.⁷⁴⁶ These examples identified the responsibility that the volunteers had towards their biblical understanding and their corporate responsibility as Christians.

Another sub-cohort (Alison, Barbara and Christopher) considered the Bible as a book containing truths which were discerned when read as a whole. Though it

⁷⁴² Ibid.

⁷⁴³ 134-135 and 207.

⁷⁴⁴ 126, 143-159 and 165-168.

⁷⁴⁵ 135-137, using the term "word of God" but not in terms of fundamentalism (Deborah and George) or as an independent word apart from experience (Fiona).

⁷⁴⁶ 125-126.

was not clear if Barbara's reluctance to own the biblical quote from Matthew 25 was due more to a lack of confidence than a refusal to own biblical literalism.⁷⁴⁷ Themes such as "justice" and "mercy" might be followed throughout the Bible to bring out truths about personal responsibility, as outlined by Christopher.⁷⁴⁸ Alison in particular sought to find ways to "live out" what she believed from the Bible and in this way communicate biblical truths.⁷⁴⁹ These approaches sought to present a sophisticated understanding of the theology contained in the Bible, which they could express, given time, but which was considered essential in living out their Christian calling. Such complexity was presented by the more experienced volunteers Alison, Linda Mark and Nigel, who readily spoke of their Christian commitments and purposes in biblical terms.⁷⁵⁰ However, when in the public arena, they sought to use less religiously loaded language, not to avoid theology but to make their message truly heard through the medium of action and support.⁷⁵¹

These volunteers all understood the Bible to contain a call to tell others, yet this was perceived differently across the cohort. Fiona felt that scripture was a gift to all humanity, and saw that in terms of enabling individuals to read or hear from the Bible what God said to them.⁷⁵² Ken saw the Bible as a witness to the call of Jesus, whilst Jennifer walked a path where she believed that the Bible contained both the threat of hell and the call of love, where she felt compelled to share that love with the clients for their sakes and for the sake of the Gospel.⁷⁵³

⁷⁴⁷ 137-138.

⁷⁴⁸ 138-139.

⁷⁴⁹ 139-140.

⁷⁵⁰ 135-140.

⁷⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵² 139-141.

⁷⁵³ 141.

Mark suggested that personally embodying scripture meant that one was able to be present - as God was to people, but in human form, a modified sense of “Christ has no body but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours”.⁷⁵⁴ The above showed that for each volunteer, a purposeful and sustained theology had taken root in order to fulfil the nature of voluntary service to the wider community. Three different approaches to biblical understanding were shared across the volunteers – the Bible as the word of God, the Bible as containing the word of God in aggregate and the Bible as a call and gift to share.

Two particular researchers of ordinary theology have made comment in recent years on the biblical understanding of the person in the pew, with statements that gave the impression that the ordinary Christian’s comprehension of the Bible was absent or minimal or misunderstood. However, this is in contrast with the findings of this study. Firstly, with the exception of Elizabeth, who felt slightly guilty that she only read her Bible about once a month, all respondents in my study read their Bible several times a week, and most daily.⁷⁵⁵ Village did not state a specific source of information, but stated that “many Christians never actually read the Bible for themselves”.⁷⁵⁶ The volunteers in my study had clearly read the Bible for themselves. In Village’s wide cohort of respondents to his questionnaires (an impressive return of 404), some would have been active Christian volunteers, but it is not stated if Village considered

⁷⁵⁴ 139-140, and subsequent observation attributed to St Teresa of Avila by many Roman Catholic sources, such as <https://evangelicalcatholicism.wordpress.com/2009/07/15/quote-of-the-week-christ-has-no-body/> and quoted here from the “Student Christian Movement” web site: <http://www.movement.org.uk/blog/being-christs-hands-and-feet> Both accessed 1st March 2017.

⁷⁵⁵ Appendix 1.

⁷⁵⁶ Andrew Village, *The Bible and Lay people: An Empirical Approach to Ordinary Hermeneutics* (Great Britain: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), 30.

such activities.⁷⁵⁷ Village's methodology was largely quantitative, simply asking for a responses to questions on a questionnaire which, by nature, could not be explored.⁷⁵⁸ When Village did explore further, he presented the ordinary Christian with texts and asked them for interpretation.⁷⁵⁹ He compared what had been taught or preached by the church leadership and asked participants to repeat the main themes, without asking if such material was relevant to the lives of the participants.⁷⁶⁰ Such relevance is important, as in my study, it is not just theology taught for its own sake, nor for selfish reasons, but theology which has a bearing on the issues of the client group, which was pursued by each participant. Village might have described this finding as the effects of an "interpretive community and Scripture", as he discovered that, in addition to personal experience, the community affects how the Bible was interpreted.⁷⁶¹ However Village remained, at least in the first instance, suspicious of this finding, with the proviso that "At its worst, it represents the power of the self-serving and self-perpetuating sect."⁷⁶² Village went on to discuss the merits of that situation, especially for a mixed economy of congregations and communities, a mix easily found in the CofE.⁷⁶³ Village made an attempt to quantify the "applicability" of texts which he presented to the participants, by asking them to estimate how applicable the passage was to their lives.⁷⁶⁴ This was not a convincing approach as one might reasonably suggest that

⁷⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁷⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 11-17.

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 62-66.

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 138-139.

⁷⁶² *Ibid.*, 139.

⁷⁶³ *Ibid.*, 140-142.

⁷⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

churchgoers were adept at wanting to please their preacher by saying how relevant a sermon or passage was.

Village approaches his respondents with caution. At the outset, he is aware that research into biblical understanding was complex and is cautious about offering “sacred scripture” to “ordinary’ people”.⁷⁶⁵ He went so far as to say,

Perhaps if we give credence to what ordinary people do with the Bible we risk being enslaved by bad practice: will the lunatics indeed take over the asylum?⁷⁶⁶

This is part of a concern that such ethnographic studies may be too threatening, saying,

I can imagine that some ministers might find any examination of Bible reading in their congregations a threatening exercise.⁷⁶⁷

He endeavours to avoid an over simplistic approach to an ethnographic study, so he opted for a quantitative study which he hoped would “test relationships and identify causal factors” of the ordinary Bible reader.⁷⁶⁸ Village recognises that in terms of biblical interpretation:

Church congregations, no less than the community of scholars, may now represent a rich collage of differing world views and outlooks.⁷⁶⁹

Yet even in later publications Village is concerned that the ordinary theologian tends towards “biblical literalism.”⁷⁷⁰ Village considers biblical literalism in the UK compared with the USA in the initial pages, concluding that over a third of

⁷⁶⁵ Village, *The Bible and Lay People*, 2-3.

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 4

⁷⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁷⁷⁰ Andrew Village, “Biblical literalism: A Test of the Compensatory Schema Hypothesis Among Anglicans in England,” *Review of Religious Research* Vol.54 no. 2 (June 2012): 175-196, 186.

lay people who read the Bible are “biblical literalists” (39.4% for men, and 37.3 for women).⁷⁷¹ Village refers to the paucity of Bible reading in his study of congregations, accepting previous research, and suggests therefore that the majority of lay people rarely read the Bible, but that when they did they were unable to properly read and interpret the Bible for themselves.⁷⁷² Village states,

A Gallup survey of one thousand people across England found that, while 60% of respondents owned a Bible, 70% hardly, if ever, read it, and only 12% read it weekly or more (Harrison 1983). Use of the Bible was higher among churchgoers, but around a third never read the Bible, and almost half of weekly attendees read the Bible less than once a week.⁷⁷³ [Harrison 1983 refers to an unpublished report for the Bible Society by Jan Harrison.]

Further, this drew upon his findings of biblical literalism and the statement “many Christians never actually read the Bible for themselves”.⁷⁷⁴ Village uses the expression “it is more a case of bringing the foot soldiers into contact with the generals”, where academics are “the generals” and ordinary lay people the “foot-soldiers”.⁷⁷⁵ This is an unfortunate expression open as much to charges of considering the ordinary Christian as a lower class than the academics as it is to bringing out of touch “generals” of academics into touch with real “foot soldiers” who do the work. In contrast to Christie and Village, the grasp of biblical meaning and interpretation exhibited by the respondents in my study were deep and nuanced.

⁷⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷⁷² In Andrew Village, “Assessing Belief about the Bible: A Study among Anglican Laity,” *Review of Religious Research* Vol. 46 No.3 (2005) 243-254, 244.

⁷⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁴ Village, *The Bible and Lay People*, 30.

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid., 6.

All participants in my study said that they had to fall back on passages of scripture which they found relevant and applicable to their voluntary work.⁷⁷⁶ For them the Bible represented a source of material from which they found applicable readings. I would suggest that researchers following the work of Village might ask such ordinary Christian participants to present scriptures or teachings which they found helpful and explain why. This way participants would be better able to explain what they understood from such scriptures.

5.2 Faith, theology and the ordinary Christian volunteer

Simply asking the Christian volunteer to reflect on any changes to their faith as a result of volunteering brought reflections on how the experience beyond the church brought challenges to faith; changing and apparently deepening faith concepts. Rather than threaten their faith, such challenges caused the Christian volunteers to think more deeply about the implications of their faith, and how this faith might enable them, or those they were trying to support or help to make better sense of life. This is an example of the ordinary theologian, not theology based initially on books and thinkers of the past, but in the experience of life lived as a Christian in the world beyond the local church. Books, the local church, and other Christian thinkers were important, but only if they might enable the practical faith of the Christian volunteer to better engage with the issues at hand.

Though the response of these Christian volunteers may not have been a surprise to Astley, research on ordinary Christians to date has considered a more static

⁷⁷⁶ Appendix 11.

consideration of theological knowledge, such as the understanding of Christology or of prayer cards. It is the expression of the dynamic and changing faith of Christians engaged in intentional Christian work beyond the church community which I believe makes a valuable contribution to the study of ordinary theology so far.

In this chapter, I have already looked at how important the Bible was to Christian volunteers in providing a source of theological knowledge and support for their faith. No doubt their local church provided the basic spur for theological understanding through the liturgy, sermons and perhaps other group work with Christians. With the notable exception of Elizabeth, local church attendance, complete with regular personal Bible reading and attendance of some form of fellowship group or Bible study, were important to this cohort. Church attendance was at least every week for all but Elizabeth, and attendance at groups from within their local church congregation was made every week for all but Elizabeth, Nigel or Jennifer. Nigel had taken to attending prison groups in place of his local church groups and Jennifer attended church groups on an occasional basis, such as Lent or Advent, though the impression given was that this was when her local church had groups.⁷⁷⁷

However the espoused faith of the volunteers of this cohort came alive as something of vital importance and in need of further comprehension once they tried to explain how their faith had been changed or shaped by their experiences of working with people beyond the local church congregation. As Table 3 will affirm, such changes to faith cover a broad range of mainly operant theology,

⁷⁷⁷ See appendix 1, the cohort demographic.

that is, embedded in the practice of their volunteering upon issues raised by their clients, or those they support.⁷⁷⁸ On each occasion the participants wanted to build upon or challenge what their local church had taught, or at least offered them, before they started to apply their faith to their work. Though I refer to particular faith aspects spoken of by individual participants, I might have chosen any number of relevant faith aspects from examples of an operant nature for any one of the cohort. I have chosen examples from the cohort that express this change in their faith due to their experience, where the comments have been particularly well expressed or provide memorable examples.

5.2.1 *Prayer and the ordinary Christian volunteer*

In *Exploring Ordinary Theology* Astley puts prayer at the top of the list of learning experiences.⁷⁷⁹ Unlike the findings of other researchers in his book, my own findings of the volunteers in my cohort would meet Astley's expectations in this regard, as all prayed with the expectation of some change and all but two said that their praying increased with volunteering.⁷⁸⁰ All referred to prayer that they made outside of formal worship with their local church. For example, for Elizabeth, prayer was a constant struggle, continually looking for how prayer might be answered and discerning how prayer affected the outcomes of what she prayed about.⁷⁸¹ She also spoke of needing "blind faith" when praying at times, this may have been simple trust, or an expectation that something more might be revealed.⁷⁸² Christopher spoke of prayer making

⁷⁷⁸ Table 3, 164.

⁷⁷⁹ Astley, *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, 1.

⁷⁸⁰ See Table 3 164.

⁷⁸¹ 166-167.

⁷⁸² *Ibid.*

things “more Godly”, adding “I suppose”, as if to give space for further development of understanding of prayer.⁷⁸³ He was keen to express that prayer stimulated faith, enhanced his spiritual life, was constructive, and he readily spoke of prayer affecting those sharing it, using “we” when referring to prayer with a colleague.⁷⁸⁴ Moreover, crises offered the opportunity to realise the need for prayer, presenting issues, which, due to crises demanded prayer, from his Christian standpoint.⁷⁸⁵ He was therefore suggesting that prayer required thoughtful reflection and pragmatically extended the way one thought through prayer to accommodate the Godly element.⁷⁸⁶ This presented a considerable nuance to the efficacy of prayer: both spiritual (“Godly”) and pragmatic. Barbara noted that prayer for situations made them “much more real”, as if prayer provided something to discover.⁷⁸⁷

Luhrmann discussed prayer of a particular large local church.⁷⁸⁸ She sought to show how prayer could also be explained in psychological terms of “absorption.”⁷⁸⁹ Luhrmann’s absorption was a form of deep dwelling on issues, perhaps through literature or teaching, in a way that one’s thinking and emotions become enhanced or changed by those influences, so that things observed are expected to fit the pattern learnt from such deep dwelling – and so perhaps “manipulate the way the person praying attends to his or her mind.”⁷⁹⁰ This approach consequently left the question open: was this God speaking, or her

⁷⁸³ 161-162.

⁷⁸⁴ 161-163.

⁷⁸⁵ 162-164, 1C335-346.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid, amplified on 161-162.

⁷⁸⁷ 165-166.

⁷⁸⁸ Tanya Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God* (USA: Vintage books, 2012), 3-4 and 157-226.

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid., 158, and 193-207.

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid., with a specific quote from 187/8.

participants regarding their thoughts from a different perspective? Her view of prayer may therefore have been affected by her search for a resolution to this problem or alternatively a way that the individual sought reassurance, rather than a direct discussion with the divine. Luhrmann also found that her ordinary Christians “talked about prayer all the time” with a desire to “hear God better”. She likened this to doing exercises to physically tone up, but it was a “spiritual” exercise which may not have required God.⁷⁹¹ Luhrmann read prayer manuals to understand what was happening in prayer, and indeed found statements teaching Christians to recognise God’s thoughts beyond their own, which fit into her “absorption” thesis. Though not dissimilar to the way Christopher explained his prayer technique, as shown in my study, Christopher recognised that he was “seeking God” and was eager to pray with others in order to find unanimity, not simply observe his mind in a different way.⁷⁹² Similarly, Elizabeth prayed in order to be in touch with God, but recognised that she was not looking for something within herself, but for a far more subtle response by recognising how things developed.⁷⁹³ The volunteers in my study experienced prayer in a similar way to their colleagues above, albeit with different expectations. It would appear that the “absorption” of Luhrmann’s thesis was not recognisable here; God’s voice was perceived as something beyond the personal thoughts of the volunteers questioned.

In Astley’s *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, along with Astley’s expectation that prayer might be expected to be a dynamic force, were discussion papers which

⁷⁹¹ Ibid., 156

⁷⁹² 161-164.

⁷⁹³ 166-167.

expected the same. Nicholas Healy and Michael Armstrong agreed, in theory.⁷⁹⁴ However, in practice, other researchers were not so certain. Prayer was treated as a fixed practice by some. Admittedly, Tania ap Siôn had no alternative, as she was researching prayer cards left in Christian places of worship, so effectively, could only produce a snapshot of how prayer was expressed by each person at one time, though, of course together with the many prayer cards researched a more multi-faceted view of prayer might be produced.⁷⁹⁵ Roger Walton found that church leaders expected prayer to be important to committed Christians (those considered “Disciples” or “mature Christians”), and expected such prayer to build commitment to the local Christian community.⁷⁹⁶ This last point would be something Wuthnow would agree with, as he considered prayer in terms of cementing group psychology and sharing.⁷⁹⁷ Wuthnow, concluded that prayer with others simply helped people feel loved when prayed for, and to be affirmed as individuals.⁷⁹⁸ However, more in agreement with Astley’s expectations and my findings were two researchers, John Thomson and Bridget Nichols. Thomson considered three local churches involved in various forms of community outreach.⁷⁹⁹ He found that “People meet Jesus in prayer and in community service.”⁸⁰⁰ Further he concluded that “prayer focuses on resources for transformation” in these places:

⁷⁹⁴ Nicholas M Healy, “Ordinary Theology, Theological Method and Constructive Ecclesiology,” in *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, Astley, 13-22 and Michael Armstrong, “Ordinary Theologians as Signal Processors of the Spirit,” in *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, Astley, 65-73.

⁷⁹⁵ Tania ap Siôn, “Ordinary Prayer and the Activity of God: Reading a Cathedral Prayer Board,” in *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, Astley, 147-157.

⁷⁹⁶ Roger L Walton, “Ordinary Discipleship,” in *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, Astley, 179-197, 186, 182 and 185.

⁷⁹⁷ Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey*, 265.

⁷⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 296-301 and 306.

⁷⁹⁹ John B Thomson, “Sharing Friendship: God’s love in Ordinary Church Life,” *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, Astley, 189-197.

⁸⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 190.

such transformation means a change and dynamism.⁸⁰¹ Such findings are in agreement with my cohort. Nichols meanwhile draws on various sources to consider the worship of Christians, but her examples of Christian responses to prayer in different experiences of worship led her to find one participant who realised that a new place to pray brought about a deepening change to her prayers and later, that prayer in worship may lead to a transformed way of being.⁸⁰²

5.2.2 Love and the ordinary Christian

In the previous chapter, it was established that the volunteers worked in the areas they did as a result of their desire for loving Christian service and an introduction from their local church.⁸⁰³ Their continuing use of the Bible and prayer proved essential to their progress in their volunteering, as noted earlier in this chapter. However, as these volunteers experienced the challenges of working with those beyond the church congregation, they found that they needed to amend their original theological understanding as received from their local church, including their main motivation to love as Christ would. Love, therefore, would be a good word to explore with the volunteers in order to begin to register the changes to faith that became so important to their voluntary ministries.

The Christian love which motivated the majority of the volunteers was expressed by most as a reflection of the Trinitarian God of love in relationships,

⁸⁰¹ Ibid., 196.

⁸⁰² Bridget Nichols, "A Tune Beyond Us, Yet Ourselves: Ordinary Worship and Ordinary Theology," *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, Astley, 159-167, 160-161 and 167.

⁸⁰³ 143-150, summarised on 150.

which human beings should emulate.⁸⁰⁴ Such a view of love, probably learnt in the worship and teaching of their local church, was nevertheless challenged by the experience of putting it into practice in their volunteering. For some, such as Linda, that love became very pragmatic, as loving a person who does not respond is difficult, even if such love should be unconditional. Linda suggested that one should care for as many clients as possible in terms of offender work, this was for two reasons. Firstly, becoming involved with just one or two people may lead to personal over-investment, and so be either drawn into their distress, or become dis-heartened if there was no improvement in the progress of so few a number: Linda attributed this practice to the teaching at a conference on offender work that she had attended.⁸⁰⁵ Secondly, to support a higher number of people means that perhaps at least one of those you were supporting may make a positive response to your concerns and so one would be encouraged.⁸⁰⁶ Linda knew that helping others was not to gain a personal reward, nor ideally should it be, yet realised that our human need is to feel rewarded in some sense. Yeung observed such responses amongst volunteers, and offers four models where she expects volunteers to show psychological or social balance in their giving to others and their receiving from the experience.⁸⁰⁷ Not being perfect, Christian human beings need such a pragmatic love which goes beyond the ideal to protect the individual Christian, and encourages them. The ideal was not to be the enemy of the good.

⁸⁰⁴ 167-172.

⁸⁰⁵ 171-172.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁷ 47-49.

Aspects of this love appeared to hold cultural values. Linda, expected loving compassion to be linked to the desire for transformation of the other for good.⁸⁰⁸ Fiona expected God's love to be manifest in a church which required people to change so that they may see more clearly the works of God.⁸⁰⁹ Whilst Jennifer also realised that a theology of love was part of their motivation, which was accompanied by the desire that those she shared it with should not reject it and so go to hell.⁸¹⁰ Nigel, expected Christian love to be counter-cultural, launching a direct critique of sections of the current media typified by the Daily Mail.⁸¹¹ This showed a nuanced approach to what love intends, including both the theological ideals of transformation and avoiding Hell, and correctives to cultural mores in the media. Alison admitted that she did not love everybody, but said, "I do have to look for the good in them."⁸¹² Was Alison looking for the good a theological, moral or social construct? I did not press her on what exactly "love" was either, but clearly Alison felt that looking for the good in someone was something to do with love and perhaps the start of a loving relationship, even if not quite what she would recognise as "love". Again frail humanity was not despised in these approaches, but accommodated with the hope that some good (or redemption) may come of it. All the participants expected to challenge any social approach which suggested that there were good people and bad people. For the participants, all people had potential for good and all had the potential to do bad things (sin). George appeared more certain of what love was, but accepted that the practice of love was very difficult. For

⁸⁰⁸ 168.

⁸⁰⁹ 170.

⁸¹⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹¹ 169.

⁸¹² 170, 1A694-696.

George, “speaking the truth in love” was “very difficult” to do.⁸¹³ George explained that such love had to be “very gentle” and not destructive to the other person.⁸¹⁴ Such comments were drawing on experience, as he spoke from the heart. For George, loving others made one more sensitive to any damage one may do, and so required a sensitivity not to hurt others, which was in contrast to his life before embracing his Christian faith, it was an “ongoing process”.⁸¹⁵

Such a struggle to love the unlovable or unresponsive, was an honest application of love from the frailty of a Christian’s humanity, which struggled with the deep issues found in their service to others. Contrast this with other studies which tended to explain the love of Christian volunteers in terms of self-fulfilment or evangelism. For Wuthnow, love was indeed found to be a personal attribute that might be a spur to helping others.⁸¹⁶ Wuthnow discussed “Caregivers ... being engaged in service activities that demonstrate love.”⁸¹⁷ Though little was provided in terms of discussion of what this love meant to the practitioners, the conclusion was that although there was provision of such loving care, despite some clients not appreciating it, such provision was provided out of a “tradition” of altruism and a desire to be seen as “a caring person,” with the language of “love” being eschewed.⁸¹⁸ There was mention of “The Golden Rule” in this same chapter, meaning, “Treat others the way you would want to be treated yourself” and reference to “What would Jesus do?”⁸¹⁹ There was a suggestion that the “caregivers” struggled with such love. Andy Wier, referred to love in

⁸¹³ 126 and 170-171, G251-254.

⁸¹⁴ Ibid.

⁸¹⁵ 175, G1007-1014.

⁸¹⁶ Robert Wuthnow, *Saving America*. (USA: Princeton University Press, 2004).

⁸¹⁷ Ibid., 261.

⁸¹⁸ Ibid., 261-262, including “footnote 8” 330.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid., 262.

social action, but in a sense that in loving Jesus, one did things in order to evangelise those in the wider society.⁸²⁰ Some of Wier’s participants were cynical about their clients, seeing “benefit dependency as a lifestyle choice”, which might have suggested a less than loving approach to such work.⁸²¹ Wier’s cynical participants may have been voicing a particular socio-political standpoint, as opposed to the standpoint of for example my participant George shown on the previous page. George was eager to speak out of love, and might perhaps choose to speak truth in love unto power. Of my participants who came closest to Wier’s cynical participants, Jennifer appeared to hold a sense of the responsibility of the individual whom she did not want to make an uninformed choice about faith, and so go to Hell.⁸²² Lastly Luhrmann mentioned love, including “unconditional love” as aspects of a personal relationship with God and fellow congregation members – it felt good and was life affirming perhaps, but little was recorded of love having a direct outcome for others beyond the church congregation.⁸²³ Luhrmann referred to love as aspects of a personal relationship to God, or doctrine of God, such as “developing your heart.”⁸²⁴ Such findings contrasted with the findings of this study, where love showed a rich engagement in relationships with the clients, leading to self-discovery and the involvement of other aspects of faith resulting from the theology embedded in the practice of volunteering to support those beyond the local church congregation.

⁸²⁰ Andy Wier, “Faith-based social action below the radar: a study of the UK charismatic-evangelical urban church.” *Voluntary Sector Review* Vol. 5 (1) (2014) 29-45, 39.

⁸²¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁸²² 225 and 170.

⁸²³ Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back*, 426.

⁸²⁴ *Ibid.*, Title of Chapter 4, 101.

5.2.3 *Espoused theology and the ordinary Christian volunteer*

The earlier parts of this chapter show that the ordinary Christian volunteers in this study are making theological connections out of their experiences resulting from relationships made with those beyond the local church congregations. The Christian volunteers relied on basic Christian support and inspiration from the Bible, prayer and love, which all led to the application of further aspects of faith, or operant theology. In particular, the concept of forgiveness provided a common and fruitful opportunity for active and dynamic engagement with espoused theology. Each participant from my study who discussed forgiveness, understood it to be multi-faceted and something to be continually worked upon. It was understood that forgiveness brought into play further theological concepts such as self-forgiveness, forgiveness of people, forgiveness of social systems, shame and rejection (or its opposite, welcome).

Forgiveness has received very little research as an espoused theology, including in Astley's *Exploring Ordinary Theology*. References to forgiveness tend to be in terms of a simple act. One possible exception was Walton, who found the majority of ordinary Christians researched expected mature Christians to show "kindness and forgiveness".⁸²⁵ Walton found that shaping one's "workplace and home life in a Christian way" was also highly commended by ordinary Christians, whilst being a member of a Christian small group makes one "more accepting and forgiving of others".⁸²⁶ There was no research into how such forgiveness might be articulated by the ordinary Christian going about their

⁸²⁵ Walton, "ordinary Discipleship" in *exploring Ordinary Theology*, 185.

⁸²⁶ *Ibid.*, 185-186.

work. However in my research, once I asked ordinary Christians how their view of forgiveness had changed as a result of their intentional Christian volunteering, a rich seam of theological content was uncovered. It would appear that responding as a Christian to one's experiences of those beyond the local church congregation opens discussions which challenge the Christian's received understanding of forgiveness and related faith issues, which enable the ordinary Christian to think more deeply about such concepts. Maybe the tools used to unpack such depth were provided by their local churches or academic books, or maybe they relied on hearsay or their own logic. Whatever progress was made in developing their ideas of forgiveness, including allied links to compassion, mercy, shame, rejection or welcome, each volunteer knew their thoughts were limited. As will be shown, they longed to engage further on such theology with their local church and other Christians.

Forgiveness was associated with relationship. Once in communication with their clients in Christian, loving concern, all volunteers related to their clients. They readily found that forgiveness was a vital component of their clients concerns. Therefore, compassion (love) and honesty became tools of the volunteers care, including being honest about their own struggles, in response to the vulnerability of their clients honesty to them. Sharing personal experiences of faith, and in particular forgiveness was felt to be a necessary part of the relationship with their clients, and in turn became helpful to each volunteer's own understanding of faith. Elizabeth, who mainly dealt with the deaf community, found forgiveness to be an important part of her clients need, perhaps because of social disadvantage. Elizabeth felt that sharing something of

God's forgiveness could lead others to "a relationship with God".⁸²⁷ Nigel realised that he had been unforgiving in his life during his volunteering. Volunteering broadened Nigel's view of forgiveness which led to reconciliation with his son after an intense argument, a discovery which he was able to subsequently share with his clients.⁸²⁸ Deborah, meanwhile, realised during her voluntary work that she too was carrying a burden due to her lack of forgiveness, or unforgiven sinful thoughts. She recalled "how much muck I was carrying", and had to resolve this in her life, as she began to help others with their burdens of sin and un-forgiveness.⁸²⁹ George recognised how difficult forgiveness was and candidly admitted "I'm not there with it yet", not in a sense of failure, but in recognition of how difficult forgiveness and its acceptance was for everyone, including himself.⁸³⁰ The suggestion is that perhaps forgiveness needs forgiveness! Nigel was a little harder on the approach to forgiveness, saying that "it's only when you can stop making excuses that you can actually then start to take responsibility and move on."⁸³¹ He further reflected that sin had consequences that went well beyond the individual and the sinned against, to their families, friends and wider society.⁸³² However, Nigel remained humble before those he might have given this advice to, saying that had he had their life experiences then "I'd almost certainly be in prison with them."⁸³³ Here Nigel is aware of the socio-political notion of class or social disadvantage, recognising the advantages which his life experiences had afforded him compared to the less

⁸²⁷ 173-175, particularly 1E816-822.

⁸²⁸ 177-178, N542-557.

⁸²⁹ 180, 1D580-584.

⁸³⁰ 175, G1007-1014.

⁸³¹ 180-181, N634-636.

⁸³² 178 and 181, N638-641.

⁸³³ 178, N501-502.

fortunate. Elizabeth too had reflected on the social disadvantage of some of her clients in the deaf community. In this way Nigel and Elizabeth's comments may be linked to social reformers of the Victorian era and since.⁸³⁴ Esping-Andersen also pointed to class divisions as causing such social disadvantage as a product of capitalism, something Nigel and Elizabeth alluded to.⁸³⁵ For the volunteers, developing this knowledge of God's forgiveness did not give them a sense of superiority, but simply the realisation that along with their clients, they all struggled with the problems of sin and forgiveness.

Fiona and Barbara in particular realised that their attitudes to offenders before their voluntary work was judgmental. As a result of their experiences of working with offenders, they each realised that God's relationship with every human being included the offender.⁸³⁶ Indeed Barbara made a powerful point that in the Old Testament, King David was a murderer, that Joseph spent time in prison; whilst in the New Testament, St Paul spent times in prison, as did later Church reformers.⁸³⁷ For Barbara, she had thought that what was important as a Christian was "being good", but now, after her voluntary experiences, realised it was more about being faithful, so, she had to re-evaluate her faith.⁸³⁸ Nigel realised that "God has a plan" for everybody, but that each needs to change to take hold of this.⁸³⁹ Perhaps for the volunteers of my study, an experience of putting faith into practice in areas of social welfare had resulted in their reliance on their faith in God rather than accepted socio-political considerations. These

⁸³⁴ 19-33.

⁸³⁵ 28.

⁸³⁶ Fiona, 175-176, 2F1083-1093, and Barbara, 188-189, 2B199-217.

⁸³⁷ 188-189, 2B199-217.

⁸³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸³⁹ 180-181, N634-651.

volunteers strove to overcome social structures which judge some people as having contemptable behaviours, unless they were people of power, such as St Paul or King David. Esping-Andersen would see these comments as a result of volunteer welfare support being a corrective to humanise the existing capitalist system of the democratic West.⁸⁴⁰ Such discoveries for Elizabeth caused her to “marvel” when she realised the reality and consequence of compassion and forgiveness.⁸⁴¹ Fiona saw the joy of those who received forgiveness, the letting go of shame, and the transformation of lives as a result of this.⁸⁴² Such forgiveness was part of unconditional welcome, the opposite of rejection.⁸⁴³ Almost all of the faith words related to his compassionate forgiveness, and the experience of those beyond the congregation.

Clearly all the volunteers had thought about the implications of healing in their ministries with those beyond their local church congregations, following their observations. The responses to the word “healing” were varied and nuanced.⁸⁴⁴ Barbara, Fiona and Nigel felt that prayer was an important part of healing. Barbara felt healing could at least begin by praying for the desire to be healed, whilst both Fiona and Nigel were far more emphatic: believing that one might see more healing if one actually prayed for healing as if it would happen, rather than only looking to medication for healing.⁸⁴⁵ Fiona understood that when praying, Christians had authority over the evil that caused illness, and so because of this gift they could bring about healing through Jesus, “‘cause we’ve

⁸⁴⁰ 28.

⁸⁴¹ 173-175, 1E816-822.

⁸⁴² 179-180, 2F1120-1130.

⁸⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴⁴ 181-188.

⁸⁴⁵ 183, N568-582, though for Fiona, 182-183 and 184-185, 1F686-695.

got Jesus, and Jesus has defeated it [evil] and we have the authority.”⁸⁴⁶ Here Fiona expresses that God is bigger than any other authority, including political authorities, a realisation which she alluded to earlier when she reflected on her past attitudes of a conservative political nature.⁸⁴⁷

Village, though largely researching the ordinary Christian’s use of the Bible, has a helpful observation on his reflections on “Charismatic Experience and Biblical Interpretation.”⁸⁴⁸ In this case, Village states that:

There is coherence between God experienced personally, God at work in the world and God revealed in scripture, but the key factor is personal experience.⁸⁴⁹

In this case, I found that Village was correct, and indeed I would go further and say this applied to all the volunteers who participated in my study, regardless of their tradition. In terms of Fiona and Nigel, their reliance on prayer as a first approach to healing suggests a Charismatic tradition as described by Village. Village found that those who prayed for healing still met what he described as “success or failure”, but continued to believe in the practice, in much the same way as described by Fiona and Nigel and perhaps in more indirect ways by the remainder of the cohort, regardless of the attitude to a belief in healing as an emphatic need.⁸⁵⁰ Luhrmann’s observations that Christians believe more in a God who provides meaning, than a potentate who puts things right may be relevant here.⁸⁵¹ Village’s assertion that “beliefs, experiences and interpretation exist in a complex interrelationship” would appear to be true to my cohort also

⁸⁴⁶ 184-185, 1F538-545.

⁸⁴⁷ 175-176, 2F1083-1093.

⁸⁴⁸ Village, *Bible and Lay People*, 149-158.

⁸⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁸⁵⁰ See above, and Village, *Bible and Lay People*, 151 and 154.

⁸⁵¹ 37-38.

and I would agree with Village that more research into the exact relationship between all of these aspects would be helpful.⁸⁵²

Christopher, Elizabeth and Fiona felt that healing was linked in some way to forgiveness.⁸⁵³ Elizabeth felt forgiveness and its acceptance for self, transformed the way one thought, and so led to healing; whilst Christopher had a similar view centred on new choices his clients had once sin was dealt with by forgiveness.⁸⁵⁴ Transformation for Fiona and Nigel means actually changing your life because of the salvation brought about by forgiveness.⁸⁵⁵ Christopher voiced what some suggested that the word “healing” may be more “about imposing middle-class values”.⁸⁵⁶ Rather than “healing”, Christopher would have preferred the words “wholesomeness” or “healthiness”.⁸⁵⁷ This is perhaps a socio-political comment from Christopher about the value of language. “Wholeness” or “healthiness” are words common to all political ideals, whereas “healing” suggests putting something right, which Christopher is reluctant to pursue: suggesting only God knows what is right for people. Healing was usually considered in theological terms, as something more subtle than a physical manifestation or “miracle”, but may include a transformed life.⁸⁵⁸ Similarly, Linda, Ken and Mark, though recognising that other volunteers valued what they saw as healing, nevertheless felt that the word “healing” was

⁸⁵² Village, *Bible and Lay People*, 157-158.

⁸⁵³ 183-185.

⁸⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, where Elizabeth refers back to her discussion on her own experiences of forgiveness, her father etcetera and Christopher looks at the practical outcome of responding to forgiveness.

⁸⁵⁵ 186-187.

⁸⁵⁶ 183-184, 2C529-544.

⁸⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵⁸ 181-186.

inappropriate in terms of their own experiences.⁸⁵⁹ Perhaps some other word may be helpful, as Christopher suggested.

Forgiveness, as discussed in other volunteer research, was thin by comparison and often neglected. Only two researchers were found to have made any significant statements on forgiveness as experienced by volunteers. Wuthnow discusses forgiveness only in terms of a quality to be explored. His conclusions, repeated in different forms, suggested simply that forgiveness was something that “happens more often when people experience social interaction”.⁸⁶⁰

Wuthnow understood forgiveness as a quality that was enhanced when one was a member of a group where such social interaction enabled a forgiveness in the form of “letting go” of hurts by others. He also found that simple group membership increased the “ability to forgive others.”⁸⁶¹ Walton similarly commented that Christian groups made their members more forgiving.⁸⁶²

Though broadly these findings were in agreement with the research of this study, forgiveness in this study was found to be a far more complex and nuanced aspect of a Christian volunteer’s theological and ethical life.

The closest research into espoused theology was in John Thomson’s work already mentioned in this chapter. That “the love of Christ is in and through us wherever we are” could well describe how the volunteers of my study saw their ministry and this was evident in their attitudes to forgiveness being part of their

⁸⁵⁹ 181-182, L1221-1229; K631-632 with K732-733 and M930-934.

⁸⁶⁰ Robert Wuthnow, “How Religious Groups Promote Forgiving: A National Study,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 39 (2000): 125-139, 138.

⁸⁶¹ Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey*, 248-251, and 227.

⁸⁶² Roger Walton, “Ordinary Discipleship,” in *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, ed. Astley and Francis, 185.

own struggle of Christian life as forgiveness is in their clients.⁸⁶³ Thomson shows three parishes which intentionally reached beyond their congregations in social care. Thomson states from his research that:

For these ordinary disciples, faith is less a package of ideas and more a series of practices through which deeper understanding of God's ways with the world is discovered.⁸⁶⁴

Parallels are met with other comments about the espoused theology in my study. For example, Christopher, who questioned grace verses boundaries where he found that forgiveness and mercy meet safeguarding. Similarly one of Thomson's participants similarly attempting to balance "a non-judgemental approach" with "equally firm boundaries".⁸⁶⁵

Armstrong comments,

Religion is thus not about choosing to believe certain propositions; but rather to become religious is to interiorize a set of skills through practice and education.⁸⁶⁶

He envisages true doctrine, in its widest sense, to be expressed not in theology alone, but through those who have "empirical knowledge."⁸⁶⁷ Here their interiorised knowledge becomes the reality wherein "the *practice* of faith that the articulation of underlying regulative principles of doctrine as propositional statements is tested."⁸⁶⁸ There are no easy answers to the questions raised in practical Christian action, yet these questions become real once one is

⁸⁶³ See paragraphs above, compared with John B Thomson, "Sharing Friendship," in *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, ed. Astley, 189-197, 190.

⁸⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁸⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 192 with this study, 183-184, 1C477-481.

⁸⁶⁶ Michael Armstrong, "Ordinary Theologians as Signal Processors of the Spirit", in *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, ed. Astley and Francis, 65-73, 69.

⁸⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 69-71.

⁸⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 71.

confronted with an ongoing situation in practice. Only then can ethics and theology be brought to bear on a situation that needs resolution, so that the church may offer guidance and support that has currency in today's world regardless of any political standpoint.

5.3 Normative theology and the ordinary Christian volunteer

Helen Cameron et al explained “normative theology” as “Scriptures, The Creeds, Official Church Teaching, Liturgies” [commas added].⁸⁶⁹ In this study, the scriptures were considered not to be quite so “normative”, as the volunteers referred to the Bible themselves, with very little, if any, guidance from their local church and so the scriptures used were subject to each participants’ personal interpretation. Nevertheless, the remaining items on Cameron’s list appeared to have been accepted as “normative” by the volunteers in the way that they were simply accepted as learnt truths of the local church. Though the volunteers recognised the importance of such issues by responding seriously to my questions on these issues, these issues appeared to be undeveloped. Only Fiona attributed any deeper knowledge of the Trinity to her volunteering, but with uncertainty, as she was also learning from an internship programme concurrent with her volunteering.⁸⁷⁰ Thus the list of normative theologies shown on Table 3 (page 164) fell beneath the line of most volunteers’ increase of understanding. Unchurched clients apparently did not ask questions about Christian doctrine, but did discuss how they might better live their lives.

⁸⁶⁹ Helen Cameron, and Deborah Bhatti et al., *Talking about God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology* (Chippenham Wiltshire: SCM Press, 2010), 54, discussed in this thesis, 98-100.

⁸⁷⁰ Table 3, 164 and 124-125.

When I introduced such terms as God in Trinity; other faiths; and to a lesser extent creation and life after death, the volunteers produced a different response to the clearly operant aspects of faith. They usually responded with a quizzical response - why should someone wanting to know about the faith that volunteers regularly think about, wish to ask about such issues? Though the volunteers struggled to engage with such a disjointed enquiry, they persevered with the questions – perhaps that’s what they expected of researchers and vicars? In retrospect, I felt my continued pursuance of what the Trinity meant was more to do with my training as a priest. I wanted to observe a more distinctive Christian response, with an acknowledgement of where Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Father were expressed in a culture that more commonly used the word “God”. Such doctrinal issues appeared to be my problem, not theirs. However, the pursuance of such questions still led to some insight into what may have been happening in the pursuance of ordinary theology to date. Doctrinal issues such as the Trinity, creation narratives, life after death and the place of other faiths, were recognised to have been unchanged by their practice of volunteering by all but one volunteer.⁸⁷¹ Where life after death was studied by Armstrong, it was in the context of responses from church congregations, where views were given.⁸⁷² However these issues were not necessarily insignificant to the volunteers of my study, they had simply not thought further about them as a result of their volunteering. Such issues were simply not required when

⁸⁷¹ Table 3, 164.

⁸⁷² Michael Armstrong, “Extraordinary Eschatology: Insights from Ordinary Theologians,” in *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, Astley, 97-105.

engaging with their clients, and so not tested or explored in their voluntary practice.

The previous chapter outlined the responses to my questions on such issues.⁸⁷³

It was only in this subsequent analysis that it became clearer that for the volunteer to dialogue effectively with their usually unchurched clients, discussion of the Trinity, or indeed any of the above normative matter, had little relevance. Such issues were therefore difficult to bring to mind in the context of volunteering. Indeed, it was more honest to meet the client's understanding of God by talking of "God" or perhaps "Jesus"; the clients did not ask doctrinal questions about the Trinity, so the volunteers were somewhat surprised to be asked by me as researcher in this context.

Fiona explained how she avoided any talk of the Trinity as she "clumped it all together as *God*".⁸⁷⁴ When challenged about how thoughts about the Trinity was enriched by her volunteering, Linda said that it was, but gave only a general answer that in volunteering she "had to see God at work outside your comfort zone, or in new areas and ... very difficult situations."⁸⁷⁵ Elizabeth humbly insisted, "I don't really understand all that", in terms of how the Trinity operated.⁸⁷⁶ Some participants (Nigel, and Mark) identified readily with the incarnation, but did not explain this beyond their own experience.⁸⁷⁷ Similarly, Alison spoke of "God at the top" with Jesus and the Holy Spirit following.⁸⁷⁸

⁸⁷³ 191-200.

⁸⁷⁴ 193.

⁸⁷⁵ L860-863.

⁸⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, and 1E722-742.

⁸⁷⁷ Nigel was to "imitate Christ... he'd be going into prison", 194, and Mark, where a Christian draws near, it was God drawing near, 141-142.

⁸⁷⁸ 192.

All the volunteers recognised the concept of the Trinity as complex. It may even be that because of the varieties of tradition in the volunteer cohorts, there was some reluctance to discuss doctrinal issues. Even one of the more articulate participants, Christopher, used the expression “God has planted “stuff” in everyone.”⁸⁷⁹ Such expressions indicated a retreat from theological language so that the volunteers could communicate with their clients in an accessible and unembarrassed way.

Christie critiqued the ordinary Christian as having such a bias to the economic Trinity, that the immanent Trinity was absent from their doctrinal understanding.⁸⁸⁰ Christie also found a quotation from the Doctrine Commission of the CofE (1987:105) that even St Paul is not Trinitarian, quoting 2Cor.13:14:

‘the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit’ clearly indicates that ‘God’ here means the Father alone⁸⁸¹

In the case of the volunteers in my study, it was likely that the biblical formula was most commonly used as a reference point that could be sourced through a commonly available Bible, and so be helpful to their clients. Though I believe that it was not the case that the volunteers studied “fall outside the category of Christian”, nor that Christian orthodoxy (in terms of theological doctrinal purity) was “unhelpful and at worst divisive” as Christie stated, I have to admit that Christie has a point to make.⁸⁸² The Trinity, like other doctrinal aspects of faith,

⁸⁷⁹ 192-193.

⁸⁸⁰ Christie, *Ordinary Christology*, 36-40.

⁸⁸¹ Christie, *Ordinary Christology*, 38.

⁸⁸² *Ibid.*, 191-192.

was perceived by the volunteers as important for the growth of Christians. However, the volunteers in my study, knew of the Trinity and other doctrinal issues, probably from their local church teaching and worship, but they were simply not thought through. Such issues were irrelevant to the unchurched with whom they had dialogue, so for the client group with which the volunteers engaged, the simpler the language, the better – an explanation of the Trinity could wait.

5.4 Faith in the world and the local church for the ordinary Christian volunteer

In this chapter I have shown that Christian volunteers who actively pursue their Christian vocation to the community beyond that of the local church congregation are committed to their Bible reading, prayer and building their faith constructively. Engaging with the community beyond the local church excites the faith of the Christian, as it invites an immediate and practical outworking of the Christian faith. This challenges the Christian volunteer and causes them to engage with issues that are both relevant to the Christian faith, and life as lived by the unchurched. This finding offers an explanation as to why Christians are disproportionately represented amongst those who volunteer in social welfare support.⁸⁸³ Their Biblical engagement simply has a greater influence over their sense of responsibility to others than any political creed or social injunction. Such work when done by Christians is highly missional. Such mission requires engaged communication with the unchurched in common parlance rather than local church jargon. Volunteers engaged in such missions

⁸⁸³ 57-58.

would like the local church to support them, so they may respond appropriately, and in so doing the local church may learn from these intentional Christian volunteers as they bring the issues of the unchurched into focus, thus enhancing mission.

5.4.1 The community beyond the local church and the Christian volunteer

Something special happens when one has to explain the faith developed in a local church environment to those in a different community outside that environment. The previous chapter showed that the Christian volunteers readily recognised their local church culture as different to that beyond the local church congregation.⁸⁸⁴ They realised that beyond the local church congregation, they were operating in a culture which they respected and which required them to use language which was honest, direct and readily understood by the non-church members.

As has been shown in this chapter, the volunteers sensitively met their clients with honesty and humility, sharing life experiences, and, when asked, explaining why they did this work, or explaining how their Christian faith was the basis for their outlook on life or assuring clients of what may help them move forward. The clients, though often unchurched (as in usually not attending a church, and certainly not attending the church of the volunteers) appreciated this candour, respecting such views, but often questioning them. Such questioning was welcomed by the Christian volunteers, it was honest and refreshingly helpful, as the questions came from a different viewpoint from that of the local church

⁸⁸⁴ 150-158.

which had initiated their original viewpoints, so potentially deepening their own faith. Explicit mention of cross-cultural dialogue, local church to beyond, was made by many volunteers. George explained, “We’re not afraid to be in the middle of [the] secular world sharing our faith ... they test you, they pull, they pull your faith apart”, in the context that this was “an opportunity to show... we’re not inward thinking”, giving both a response to challenge and an opportunity to prove that Christians were willing to reach out to others constructively.⁸⁸⁵ Barbara recalled the value of those in a culture beyond her local church, recollecting a prison chaplain’s comment regarding prison services: “This is the only place I’ve known where I’ve had to stop people praying”⁸⁸⁶. Christopher made a more reflective comment on volunteering in a non-church culture saying, “it brings a challenge, both intellectual challenge and decision making challenge and people skills challenge, that it stretches, faith”.⁸⁸⁷ Clearly, the volunteers felt that their dialogue with those beyond their local church congregation encouraged them to develop what faith they had, and desired to press for further theologically informed knowledge.

Mark voiced what others indicated, that such engagement threw him back to reading the scriptures.⁸⁸⁸ Such reference directly to the scriptures would have been critiqued by Village as a danger of simply reading into the scriptures what he needed, especially if he was not guided by his local church community.⁸⁸⁹

Rogers, in studying congregational hermeneutics, identified that worship songs

⁸⁸⁵ 156-157, G1247-1258.

⁸⁸⁶ 157, 2B527-529.

⁸⁸⁷ 157-158, 2C669-674.

⁸⁸⁸ 141-142, M1016-1019 and M1092-1116.

⁸⁸⁹ 214-216, Village, *The Bible and Lay People*, 138-142.

and congregation group members often resorted to “text linking” rather than a developed theology, which was nevertheless mediated corporately in a local church by “sermons, liturgy, prayers, songs, house groups, congregants, Christian publications, church interior layout, web site design and hand held microphones.”⁸⁹⁰ Rogers concluded that Biblical hermeneutics benefits greatly by being “developed together, not in isolation.”⁸⁹¹ The danger for the Christian volunteer working beyond the congregation is exactly this isolation and the danger of applying inappropriate hermeneutic to their Biblical interpretations as they look for solutions to issues raised in this environment.

Alison recognised the dangers, even if one correctly interpreted a matter of theology in the culture beyond the local church congregation, saying, “It’s quite frightening as well because if you’re telling them something and they’re picking up it incorrectly, you’re doing more damage.”⁸⁹² Nigel recognised current dangers should the local church not engage with cultures beyond itself “But the church has got to find different ways of, of communicating at the moment ... There’s no connection between what the people do [those beyond church] and what the church does.”⁸⁹³ This comment has resonance with Olson, Arborelius and Idestrom, who also recorded a disjoint between church leadership, congregations and the community beyond the local church congregation.⁸⁹⁴ Clearly the volunteers were excited by and relished the challenge of the cross-cultural dialogue from Christian faith culture to that of the world beyond church.

⁸⁹⁰ Andrew Rogers, “Congregational Hermeneutics: Towards Virtuous Apprenticeship” in Astley, *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, 117-126, 118.

⁸⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁸⁹² 158, 2A1046-1047.

⁸⁹³ 158, N915-917.

⁸⁹⁴ 50-53.

This was both a spur to their need for deeper biblical and theological understanding and a frustration, as the volunteers felt alone in this task, as evidenced by the comments above.

5.4.2. The local church and the Christian volunteer

Something unsettling happens when the motivated and enthused Christian volunteer returns to their local church with news of their work beyond the congregation. Most of the Christian volunteers in this study perceived their local churches as being disinterested or dismissive when they tried to engage with their local church about their work beyond the congregation. This is in contrast to the acceptance that all the Christian volunteers felt from those outside their local church congregation. This was evidenced from a variety of related comments. Alison felt that as a licenced lay minister, her colleagues showed little interest with her main concern for the deaf community, “they’re not all that good I’ve discovered because they’re not interested in the deaf side of things”.⁸⁹⁵ Barbara, Deborah, Jennifer and Ken all had experiences where the local church was not interested in what they had to share.⁸⁹⁶ Indeed Deborah had attempted to explain to her church why it was important for Christians to support offenders, but says, “I didn’t get through to anybody.”⁸⁹⁷ George was particularly concerned that members of a home group he led would not pursue even the simplest of tasks to support offenders, even when they had agreed that it was important.⁸⁹⁸ The volunteers clearly wished to share their experiences

⁸⁹⁵ 2A422-431, quote from 2A424-425.

⁸⁹⁶ 168 1B507-530, 159 1D766-775, 147 J1739-1752 and 127-128, K447 and K253-268 respectively.

⁸⁹⁷ 159, 1D766-775.

⁸⁹⁸ 126, G251-271.

and thinking, and ask about the theology which they were finding helpful to their work in social welfare. I have already mentioned the work of Olson, Arborelius and Ideström in also finding a mis-match between the various sub-cultures within a church, of which volunteers may be one.⁸⁹⁹ It is possible that these volunteers were approaching church leaders or members having thought for some time about the issues, unlike the church leaders or members who did not share the volunteers' viewpoints yet were suddenly presented with the volunteer's statements or questions. *Chapter 2* explains how historical socio-political outlooks created over decades and influenced by international, national and local or family thinking could affect individuals and sub-groups even within a congregation.⁹⁰⁰ It could be that the directly theological nature of the volunteers' statements and questions could not be assimilated or heard, by those who had not yet had the challenge of engaging theologically with those in social need beyond their own experience. The volunteers of this study had recognised the need to communicate with the culture beyond that of the local church congregation using their faith language (theology) which may have been appropriate for the wider culture, but was not immediately understood in the culture of their local churches.

Far from being put off their churchgoing by the response of the local church, the volunteers valued their local church, as almost all attended worship more than once a week: three reported an increase in their attendance of worship and groups when volunteering though an equal number said their attendance was

⁸⁹⁹ 244 and 50-53.

⁹⁰⁰ 19-37.

less.⁹⁰¹ Their local churches were, for example, largely responsible for directing each volunteer into their voluntary work.⁹⁰² The doctrinal issues and theologies of love, the Trinity, life after death and other faiths were sufficient to sustain their Christian vocations and convictions.⁹⁰³ Clearly local church worship was valued, as attendance increased or was maintained for all.⁹⁰⁴ Similarly local church fellowship groups were valued, as they remained important for all but Mark who now attended prison fellowship groups in their place.⁹⁰⁵

However, two of the more experienced volunteers, Linda and Christopher were more sanguine about a lack of interest from their local church congregations. Linda felt that she might have less work commitments and fewer family obligations than others (though I am not sure if that was the case).⁹⁰⁶ She pragmatically suggested that availability for voluntary work may vary according to personal circumstances, as life brings different challenges and responsibilities which may reduce the personal resources available for the inclusion of voluntary work at any one time.⁹⁰⁷ Christopher had become more accepting of his church having other priorities than his work with offenders, but he had also witnessed that over the years his church had become more accepting of his work and the increase in homeless people and offenders now attending worship and using the church, explaining,

So a few years ago the stewards were a bit sneery (Sic.) and out of their depth when strange looking people came in off the streets, and

⁹⁰¹ Table 2, 132, with the attending commentary, 131-133 and Appendix 1.

⁹⁰² 143-150.

⁹⁰³ 191-200.

⁹⁰⁴ Table 2, 132, with the attending commentary, 131-133 and Appendix 1.

⁹⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁶ L1837-1895.

⁹⁰⁷ Ibid.

now they're inclined just to be relaxed and go and make a cup of tea and bring some biscuits and that kind of thing so... and that's not something that we've actively educated people to. I think because we're there bringing a wider range of people into the building, people have just got used to it in a natural way.⁹⁰⁸

However, these views do not negate the overall concern that the local church is at best ambivalent towards those who conduct Christian mission beyond the congregation.

There is a remarkable parallel with the findings of Matthew Barton and Rachel Muers study into Christian vegetarians.⁹⁰⁹ The Christian vegetarians in their similarly small scale study found the same reluctance of their local church to accept and constructively respond to their ethical stance on vegetarianism, as did the volunteer of my study find in their commitment to their clients by their local churches. Both Barton and Muers and my cohorts were living out their understanding of the Christian faith through practical action: one through not eating animal flesh and my cohort in supporting the disadvantaged.⁹¹⁰ Both sets of cohorts had developed theological understandings, biblically based, recognised by other Christian organisations and as a result of their Christian faith, no doubt initiated by a local church.⁹¹¹ Though in each study individuals longed to talk about their particular Christian stand (on vegetarianism or supporting the disadvantaged beyond the congregation), the local church proved resistant to considering even the simplest accommodation, such as providing a

⁹⁰⁸ 2C82-88, also implied in 155, 2C860-879. Church having other priorities, 1C364-366.

⁹⁰⁹ Matthew Barton and Rachel Muers, "A Study in Ordinary Theological Ethics: Thinking about Eating," in *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, Astley, 169-177.

⁹¹⁰ Ibid., and in this chapter.

⁹¹¹ Ibid.

vegetarian main meal at their lunches, or letting a volunteer talk on their experiences at a service.⁹¹² Barton and Muers reflect on how those who have developed a particular theological and ethical reasoning are set “at odds with those who first taught them the faith.”⁹¹³ It is not so much that the vegetarians (or in my case volunteers) are necessarily wrong in their conclusions, but have each just developed a way of Christian living that was not pursued by fellow Christians in their local churches. It is clear that there will be “prejudices, personalities and pitfalls involved in community based casuistry” such as each of these stands, but equally the local church needs to avoid causing division simply because of difference.⁹¹⁴ As Barton and Muers say, the only way errors may be corrected, encouragements be offered and Christian practices be celebrated is “to honestly enter into conversation with those whose ordinary theology differs from one’s own.”⁹¹⁵ It could be that a discussion of the effects of historical socio-political influences may be helpful to remove barriers to theological discussion and further local church interest in the work done by its volunteers with the community beyond the church which may enhance its missionary impact.

Roger Walton interviewed 40 church leaders, followed up with a quantitative questionnaire of 691 church members.⁹¹⁶ Walton included questions about discipleship, including what was to be expected of someone who was a mature Christian in as un-judgemental way as possible.⁹¹⁷ From the qualitative study of

⁹¹² Ibid.

⁹¹³ Barton, “Ordinary Theological Ethics: Eating”, in *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, Astley, 173.

⁹¹⁴ Ibid., 175.

⁹¹⁵ Ibid.

⁹¹⁶ Roger L Walton, “Ordinary Discipleship,” in *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, Astley, 179-197.

⁹¹⁷ Ibid., 179-180.

church leaders, a mature disciple included being someone who wants to work for the Lord in a loving and empathic way, caring about people whatever they were doing or wherever they were, though they would be expected to seek to use their gifts in the service of Christ, discussing with their church leaders what may be best for them to do.⁹¹⁸ There is acknowledgement that such Christians should work in the world as if for Christ in mission, but when it came to church members, what tended to be important was the work for the church, not mission. The much wider but quantitative 691 questionnaires from Christians say discipleship means doing things for the Lord, but mainly list church based issues, not life in the world. Walton concludes,

Both for leaders and believers, the formative power of engagement with the world and its, often hidden, promise of encounter with ‘the other’ is not promoted or sought.⁹¹⁹

Thereby hangs the problem, the church members may be far too church centric in terms of wanting mature Christian “disciples” to work for the church, and so the role of mission beyond the church congregation becomes lost.⁹²⁰ Perhaps even church leaders think first of the needs of their congregations above the needs of the world, therefore more needs to be done on this as Walton requests.⁹²¹ Ordinary theology of Christians, be they leaders or church members is an issue of great importance for those who are active in their ministries, whether in the church or in the world. Perhaps engaging in local church issues

⁹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 180-184.

⁹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁹²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹²¹ *Ibid.*

avoided a more painful discussion of the politics and social expectations abounding in the culture beyond that of the local church congregation.

Each volunteer suggested that their practical experiences with people beyond their local churches had a more authentic sense to them than their church experiences. They expressed an increase in their understanding of theology which was operant, in the sense that it was embedded in the work they did as a result of engaging with people beyond their local church congregation.

Unfortunately, their local church congregation appeared unwilling to co-operate or engage with the volunteers' experiences or respond to questions of theology arising from their work, even though the local church had provided a starting point for grappling with such life issues.

6 CONCLUSIONS

This study began with an appreciation of the work done by Christian volunteers and their work beyond their local church congregations with offenders or those who were deaf. I quickly found evidence that such work encouraged these Christians to explore and extend their understanding of their Christian faith, with a desire to develop their theology in areas that their work took them. Astley's ordinary theology was found to be a valuable tool in framing the responses of the ordinary Christians whose theology was challenged and furthered through their experience and practice in such intentional Christian work.

Using Astley's ordinary theology in this way produced findings which could contribute to wider researchers work on Christian volunteers in recent decades. Though Astley expected to find a developed theology presented by the ordinary Christian, many of the studies pursuing Astley's ordinary theology to date have resulted in largely critical observations, with studies revealing that ordinary Christians had not generally reflected the theology their church had taught them.⁹²² Indeed, by his later work, Astley conceded that perhaps ordinary theology was not always "helpful to their spiritual life or sense of meaning, and may even get in the way of things."⁹²³ My study found a different cohort of ordinary Christians who were encouraged and engaged with theology. The theology used by the Christian volunteers had to be relevant to the people they engaged with who existed beyond the local church congregation. These

⁹²² 93-97, where it is shown that the work of Christie and Village in particular hold this view.

⁹²³ Astley *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, 2.

Christian volunteers by necessity had to think and work with a theology which though based originally on local church teachings, had to be interpreted and worked with in terms of what the community beyond the local church congregation could understand.⁹²⁴ This became apparent through the way in which almost all the volunteer cohort struggled to find support for their theological struggles in their local churches.

I therefore conclude with a brief reflection on how my findings may contribute to the wider research on Christian volunteering, followed by my specific contribution to Astley's ordinary theology, and ending with the resultant specific implications for developing the work and mission of the local church.

6.1 Comparing findings with general research into Christian volunteering

In general terms, all the researchers of Christian volunteering called for further studies into the rather nebulous aspect of "faith". I found that in using Astley's ordinary theology in particular I agreed with Robbin's conclusion from Christian anthropology studies that "Christian action expresses what they believe in".⁹²⁵ In other Christian volunteer studies, VanHeuvelen; Ruiter and De Graf; Lam and also Webber had looked to church attendance as the main sign of Christian commitment, whereas I would suggest from my findings that their research may have benefitted by specifically looking for church attendees

⁹²⁴ As shown throughout chapters 4 and 5.

⁹²⁵ 30-32.

who volunteered beyond the local church community or perhaps were involved in other active ministry such as Christian outreach.⁹²⁶

Kaldor, Francis and Hughes concluded that they needed “other drivers” than personality to explain why churchgoing spurred voluntary work.⁹²⁷ I would suggest that my study found that it was the faith of the churchgoer which spurs them onto further volunteering and commitment.⁹²⁸ Similarly I found that the faith or theology of the Christian volunteer was very important when looking at what influenced Christian volunteering, as expected by Wuthnow and Wier, and in Park and Smith’s desire for something to “unravel” religious influences in Christian volunteers.⁹²⁹

A number of researchers appeared to privilege the taught theology of the local churches over the ordinary theology of the Christian volunteer. In my cohort, I found a vibrant theology arising out of Christian engagement with social issues in the wider community with which their local churches had not engaged.⁹³⁰

Allahyari and Wuthnow expected volunteers to repeat local church taught theology regardless of its relevance to the work of their researched cohort of volunteers.⁹³¹ It may have been more rewarding for Allahyari and Wuthnow to have considered the theology that volunteers needed to operate in the world beyond the congregation and to ask if the local church taught theology appropriate to the volunteers’ needs.

⁹²⁶ 30-32.

⁹²⁷ 36-37 and 143-153.

⁹²⁸ Ibid.

⁹²⁹ 43, 45 and 42-43.

⁹³⁰ 153-160.

⁹³¹ 209-210.

Prayer, love and forgiveness can be self-serving and inward looking from the results of the work of Luhrmann, Walton and Wuthnow.⁹³² My cohort looked beyond themselves and their church communities to engage with these three important aspects of faith and theology, in each case finding reward in the response of others. My cohort still recognised the value of exercising prayer, love and forgiveness in relationship with others (as found in Luhrmann, Walton and Wuthnow above) but in a way that involved reconciliation, struggle and marvel, so therefore not self-serving or inward looking.⁹³³

It is possible that Cameron's studies into voluntary work, though extensive, could have been extended by pressing her contributors to explain further their responses to questions and holding the interviews away from the place of work or worship of the participants.⁹³⁴

I found particular areas of agreement with Barton and Muers study of Christian vegetarians as another group who like my cohort had to work out their own theological approach to life apart from the limited experience of the local congregation.⁹³⁵ Similarly I would agree with Walton's conclusion that the local church may become too church-centric and so lose the ability to mature into Christians of service to communities beyond the congregation.⁹³⁶

⁹³² 220-221 and 226-227.

⁹³³ 160-191.

⁹³⁴ 54-56 and 97-103.

⁹³⁵ 248-249.

⁹³⁶ 249-250.

6.2 Impact of findings upon Astley's ordinary theology to date

In many ways Astley's *Ordinary Theology* predicted the outcome I found from the enthusiastic theological engagement which my cohort produced. Early in his book, Astley talks of "the 'hidden curriculum' of our life or our liturgy", later giving the example of Jesus's teaching as indirect and incarnational.⁹³⁷ Astley presents ordinary theology as "routinely ignored by academic Christian theology", though broadly true here, it is possible that the studies of the Anthropology of Christianity come closest to regularly considering forms of ordinary theology, noted here in *Chapter 2*.⁹³⁸ Astley's point is that he is arguing "for the relevance" of listening and looking for ordinary theology in the lives of ordinary believers.⁹³⁹ This relevance is gained by looking differently at the practitioners of Christian faith.⁹⁴⁰ More explicitly he states, "Our practices, and therefore our experiences, are thus undergirded by meaning, in so far as these things are 'meaningful' to us."⁹⁴¹ Here Astley posits, one is getting to know God, rather than getting to know about God.⁹⁴² Therefore the argument that "All real theology" arises from a dialogue between this real experience of life and the Christian tradition.⁹⁴³ It is therefore clear that Astley expected to find the enthusiastic and engaged theology featured in my study, even if it was absent in other studies using ordinary theology, especially those of Christie and Village.

⁹³⁷ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 4 for the quotation and 11 for Jesus.

⁹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1. For the Anthropology of Christianity, 25-26 in this Thesis.

⁹³⁹ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 1.

⁹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹⁴² *Ibid.*, 29.

⁹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 3.

Village made a largely quantitative study of church members.⁹⁴⁴ By their nature questionnaires offer no immediate opportunity for asking follow up questions to the responses given. Village continued with a limited follow up studies of semi-structured questioning, but similarly to the other researchers discussed in the previous paragraph, tended to look for how local church taught theology had been absorbed regardless of the relevance of that theology to the work of his participants.⁹⁴⁵ Village also began his research with the premise that ordinary Christians did not know or to any extent read their Bibles.⁹⁴⁶ It may be that Christians who did not put their faith into practice did not read their Bibles, but my cohort of Christians who lived out their faith through social welfare volunteering certainly read their Bibles regularly, and looked to the Bible for inspiration.⁹⁴⁷

My findings did not resonate with the findings of Christie who felt that the ordinary Christian's belief system fell "outside the category of Christian", as my cohort expressed orthodox doctrinal beliefs, even if not well thought through.⁹⁴⁸ Where I agree with Christie is that the doctrine taught by the church has little relevance to the lives of people beyond the church congregation, and so doctrine is not so well explored, even by my cohort of active Christians.⁹⁴⁹

The differences may lie in the ways I performed the methodology in my study as I strove for a truer sense of Astley's proposal for ordinary theology from the

⁹⁴⁴ 96-97.

⁹⁴⁵ 213-216 and 233-234.

⁹⁴⁶ 215-216.

⁹⁴⁷ Appendix 1 (2nd page) and Appendix 11.

⁹⁴⁸ 240-241.

⁹⁴⁹ Ibid.

ordinary Christian. I therefore will discuss aspects of my methodology which may have enabled my cohort of volunteers to respond with a vibrant sense of faith.

1) A stronger sense of the ordinary theology that Astley referred to may be found in a cohort of Christians who are actively engaged with any work or service as a result of their Christian calling. I used Christian volunteers who worked in social welfare in the community beyond their local congregation, but it may be that those who are paid still have overriding Christian motivations for their work, and those who volunteer within the church congregation may also have distinct theological views.

2) I found it helpful to be less prescriptive about what it means to be an ordinary Christian than Astley was. The lines are blurred between what it means to have academic training, as for example a church which has a good teaching ministry which may follow academic lines. I simply avoided those who were professional theologians and those who were trained at theological colleges for church leadership and do not believe that this compromised the sense of ordinary theology offered.⁹⁵⁰

3) I approached members of the cohort away from either their church or work environment (building or congregation). This way the individuals were more likely to respond independently to the influence of the environment.

⁹⁵⁰ 83-85.

4) When asking semi-structured questions I used terms that were not theologically loaded and were non-threatening. For example using the words “your faith” rather than “your theology”. I endeavoured to use words common to the participant, and the environment in which the participant operated, and not words which suggested an academic approach. This meant using words which had meaning within their local church or volunteering colleagues. I was able to be an “observer as participant”, as I had some understanding of where the ordinary Christian was operating, including the jargon used and other aspects of language used in their work, and this reassured the participants that I was engaged and ready to listen to them.⁹⁵¹

5) I asked for scriptures or aspects of faith that were relevant to the participant in their faith and work, or what they wished to explore in order to aid their involvement with the world in which they operated. I avoided testing their theology against that of their church or my understanding of theology, so that the participants would not feel that they had to perform in some way. I did sometimes seek for a clarification of exactly what the participant was saying in a way in which they could readily correct me, which they did. This was done in a spirit of openness in order to avoid the temptation to positively privilege my personal theological approaches or to compare their replies with the theological teachings of their local church.⁹⁵²

6) I was aware that the first response to a question was just that. I readily probed for more meaning and depth. Indeed the ordinary Christian was

⁹⁵¹ 81-83.

⁹⁵² 100-105.

honoured by such attention to their discourse, and longed to talk more deeply than usual conversations allowed.⁹⁵³

In this study, I did not observe and compare the ordinary theology espoused by the participant with their practice (operant theology). To do that would have taken considerable resources, but future studies may find this extra step rewarding. Nevertheless, I found ample response as expected in Astley's original book, *Ordinary Theology*.

From the responses I received, I can make some discussion upon how the church may be informed by the volunteers' experiences for mutual benefit.

6.3 Local church practices and ordinary theology

Despite the local church encouraging the volunteering, once involved with the work, there was little church teaching or support which was relevant to the specific work of the volunteer, with no offer to engage with their needs.⁹⁵⁴

These Christian volunteers had to find their own support from Biblical material, having apparently no support from their local church support.⁹⁵⁵ The volunteers also looked to each other for support, and perhaps to a chaplain, but they hoped for support from their local church.⁹⁵⁶ Issues where further theological input was required were all in what might be considered operant theology, that is, theology embedded in the actual practices of the volunteers. By nature this was different from the theology required in the practice of just being church.

⁹⁵³ Ibid and 201.

⁹⁵⁴ 126, 143-159, 165-168 and 211.

⁹⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁵⁶ Ibid.

However it could be that some aspects of local church ministry could be done differently. By engaging more with the Christian who volunteers beyond the local church congregation, the local church may have the opportunity to become more relevant to the everyday experience of the ordinary members of the congregation and speak more directly to any person invited to church. This may be a spur to mission.

6.3.1 *What the ordinary Christian volunteer may offer the local church*

The volunteers of my cohort were well aware that in their work they were crossing barriers of class and culture.⁹⁵⁷ Studies by Becker and Dhingra and also Wuthnow, recognised a similar crossing of class and culture barriers. They found that volunteers involved in welfare support not only mixed and communicated with those in need of social support, but also with others throughout the social structure of society, from welfare support professionals and community leaders to all areas of social class.⁹⁵⁸ The incarnational nature of the volunteers' ministries across such a social breadth was surely good for social cohesion, and a constructive presentation of the relevance of the church community of which the volunteers were members. This incarnational sense of ministry by the volunteers meant that the volunteers of this study were able to speak from direct experience, as much of *Chapter 4* gives witness. These volunteers had knowledge of the culture beyond that of the congregation, and were responding to the practical needs of the poor in ways that were seen by the other agencies and leaders who recognised their work.⁹⁵⁹ Such first-hand

⁹⁵⁷ 153-160.

⁹⁵⁸ 40-41.

⁹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* and Chapter 4.

knowledge of the world beyond the congregation would be of benefit to the local church, as it could inform the church's thinking on mission and ministry.

The volunteers of this study thought deeply about faith and so theology in ways that communicated with those they supported. This was evidenced in the way in which the volunteers often found they needed to respond to questions of forgiveness and love.⁹⁶⁰ Of itself, this was mission. The language which the volunteers had to use necessarily communicated to their clients, but was unlikely to be a language which the local congregation immediately recognised, being of a different culture.⁹⁶¹ But such a language is essential for mission, as it would provide an authentic voice that reaches beyond the local church. The local church would do well to familiarise itself with such communication.

The volunteers of my cohort found that in responding to questions of love, forgiveness, grace, prayer, healing and discernment from those beyond their congregation meant that the world counts these theological ideas as important. Further, as the questions arise from interaction from clients who live in the world beyond a church congregation, the volunteers were forced to think hard about these concepts which had originally been learned from within a church congregation. The volunteers were challenged over trite and simplistic uses of such words as love and forgiveness. In struggling to explain love and forgiveness to those who were not of their church community the volunteers had the potential to bring a deeper meaning to these concepts. This would benefit all who became part of the discussion, which in the first place included the

⁹⁶⁰ 167-190.

⁹⁶¹ See 153-159.

volunteers' clients, with the potential to benefit the church. A fresh and considered view of love and forgiveness can only be good for the church, overcoming assumptions and blind spots, or as Swinton and Mowat might put it, providing "unnatural self-reflection" to "complexify and explore" an everyday situation.⁹⁶²

The volunteers of my study encountered cultural socio-political issues which offended Christian notions of justice. Nigel spoke of the Daily Mail as unjustly blaming addicts and the homeless for their own plight, and simply proposing punishment without making space to understand the situation or reaching out to care, as he did.⁹⁶³ He had pondered the role of the media in forming opinions, rightly or wrongly. Nigel also considered the issues of social deprivation or educational disadvantage, noting that some offenders' pasts were so horrific that "if I'd been part of their story, I'd almost certainly be in prison with them."⁹⁶⁴ This was not about party politics or personal preferences, but a visceral discovery of the injustice alive in our modern world as experienced by those faithful to Christ's mission. The church needs to hear this, so that it may respond authentically.

The volunteers were eager to talk about their experiences, but need to have a church that will be receptive.

⁹⁶² Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, 13 and 15-16. See also this thesis 88-90.

⁹⁶³ 169 and 225.

⁹⁶⁴ 230-231.

6.3.2 *What the local church may offer the ordinary Christian*

The volunteers of my cohort were from a spread of church traditions and settings (see *Table 1*).⁹⁶⁵ Regardless of this, all would welcome a receptive environment to their theological questions and of their experiences from their local churches. So I now look at what the local church may offer in order to enable constructive support and reception of the voluntary work of this cohort.

Most of the cohort felt that they were not heard by local church members and leaders when they had theological questions, or wanted to share the excitement of the work they did.⁹⁶⁶ It may be helpful for the local church to provide a pastoral response by their leaders. This would require members of the local church leadership to have the time and ability to engage with what their volunteers are bringing from the culture beyond that of the congregation. This could be done with either specialist training or simply time to spend understanding the volunteers' environments so that they may appropriately appreciate the cultural and spiritual issues brought by the volunteers.

It may be helpful for the church to prepare teaching on injustice and the historical socio-political influences upon welfare support or other issues relevant to volunteers concerns. Some of these issues are mentioned in *Chapter 2*.⁹⁶⁷ This could be extended to include more theologically informed issues such as what challenges there are to human love in the vulnerability of our own humanity. Other such issues may include, where is forgiveness evident in our

⁹⁶⁵ 113.

⁹⁶⁶ 126, 143-159, 165-168 and 211.

⁹⁶⁷ Especially 2.6.

church, where is it not, and how to address this? How can social issues be addressed as a Christian? How do we discern answers to prayer, both in simple requests and in terms of outcomes in complex lives? All these were raised as issues that volunteers had to address, but felt that they needed more support.⁹⁶⁸

The church needs to be bold enough not only to make explicit personal responsibility, but also address collective social responsibility on issues such as justice and poverty. The Biblical passages that the Christian volunteers found helpful are listed in *Appendix 11*, and these may provide an insight into the way volunteers working in social welfare used their Biblical understanding.⁹⁶⁹

The Volunteers of my study would have welcomed theological debate in line with their church tradition so that they might dig deeper into the spiritual and social issues of justice that they found. They wished to remain in partnership with their local church, and indeed some became more committed to church events, with George Fiona and Jenifer increasing their church giving.⁹⁷⁰

Provision of a directory providing contacts with other churches involved in similar projects to themselves both locally and nationally or even internationally was also requested.⁹⁷¹

Of course, prayer support for the work of volunteers involved in intentional Christian voluntary work is helpful and supportive.

⁹⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁹ 126-138.

⁹⁷⁰ See Table 2 (132), and commentary 131-133 and Appendix 1.

⁹⁷¹ 155-156.

6.4 Ordinary theology.

What the application of Astley's ordinary theology has brought to this study is that ordinary theology brings knowledge born of experience, even if initially the words used are often inadequate and the ordinary theology results from intentional Christian engagement with the world. Something bigger than individual agency is calling the Christian into a deeper and better knowledge of love, forgiveness, grace, prayer, healing and discernment within the world. The Christian volunteer has found the theology they initially held was simply a starting point. It is not necessarily a new or different theology that the ordinary theologian has, but a holy urgency and search for theological knowledge resulting from their engagement with the world. These Christian volunteers own an ordinary theology which pushes beyond the taught theology of their local church, yet their questions and experiences offer challenge and a further desire for a deeper theology than that originally received from the local church. Both local churches and academic studies would benefit by engaging with active Christians at this level in order to develop the greatness of God's calling. It is this debate about what God is calling us to that is both an ordinary process and true theology. It is a theology necessarily mediated by the church, but informed by the academic study and experience that the ordinary theologian of this study is asking for. The ordinary Christians in this study were actively engaged with mission in the world, and expressed a theology which they longed to pursue at depth and share. It is this theology that the church needs to respond to and Astley's ordinary theology has been shown to enable this ordinary theology to be respected and recognised and potentially be developed.

Astley's hope for the discovery of an "ordinary theology" is in our grasp, and here reveals an exciting theology of practice and mission. There is scope for further research to explore Astley's ordinary theology in the lives of active Christians. For the church leader, listening more to those involved in active Christian work may be the key to missional teaching. In this study, the ordinary Christian volunteer has proved their worth in both practice and theological acumen, though they may not realise it. It is the active ordinary Christian that this thesis honours, and for whom it gives thanks.

APPENDICES

Appendix1: Cohort demographic

Male: CGKMN (5). Female: ABDEFJL (7).

Age at first interview:

18-20[] 21-30 [F] 31-40 [GL] 41-50[] 51-60 [CEM] 61-70 [BDJ] 71-72 [AKN]

Employment status:

A (Higher managerial, administration or professional): [M N]

B (Intermediate managerial, administration or professional): [C K L]

C1 (Supervisory or clerical, junior managerial admin or professional): [E D]

C1-C2 (Self-employed skilled/admin prof): [A B]

C2 (Skilled manual worker): [J]

D (Semi-skilled or unskilled manual work): [G]

E (State income or pension only, casual work or lowest grade worker)

Student [F] Where? Intern, Ashkelon City Church ((2nd Interview moved to London church.))

Unemployed: [C] How long? Two months Retired: [B D J K M N]

Volunteer status:

2 Deaf church volunteers (both female). 10 Prison/ex-offender volunteers (5male 5 female), of which: 1 Intern (female) and 2 Sycamore Tree Leaders (Task requiring considerable training and commitment) (both males).

Family responsibilities:

Single: [F] Married: [ABCDEFGKLM] Partner []
Engaged [] Divorced [] Widowed: [J]

Children at home: [G] Age 0-5 [1] also another child not living at his home.
[N] Adult child, but temporary and “no responsibility”.
[K] Had no children at home, but an adult disabled child
needing “Occasional help”.

Parents at home [none] (D until recent months.)

All Christian, for how long?:

A=60yrs; B=54yrs; C=38yrs; D=54yrs; E= 30yrs; F=3yrs; G=9yrs;
J=44+yrs; K=57yrs; L=27yrs; M=40+yrs; N=40+yrs.

What particular Denomination do you hold to?

ABDEFGJKLN = CofE, some + other affiliations (Baptist, Pentecostal);

C= Free Church, CofE in the past,

M= Non-denominational house church, CofE in the past.

How frequently do you attend church worship?

More than once a week: [**ABCD**FGJKLN] Once a week: [**M**]

Fortnightly Monthly

At least once a quarter [**E**] Easter/Christmas

Only funerals & weddings.

Do you attend a fellowship group?

How often does it/each meet?

ABCDFGKLM all weekly under a variety of names, and usually more than one group.

J Occasionally, Lent etc. more frequent in the past.

N No longer attends so that he can give more commitment to attending prison groups.

Original names offered, not used as all varied:

Bible Study :

Pastorate group :

Special concerns group :

Church Council :

Church committee :

Other/s: [**E non-church support groups only**.]: (eg support, self-help group)

How often do you pray?

Several times a day: [**ABCDEF**JKLN] Daily: [**G**] Several times a week: [**M**]

Weekly: About once a month: Only when in trouble:

How often do you read the bible alone?

Times a day: [**F**] Daily: [**ABCDG**JKLN] Several times a week: [**M**]

Weekly: About once a month: [**E**] Only when in trouble:

Do you read any other devotional book?

Times a day: Daily: [**ABCDEFGHIJLMN**] Several times a week:

Weekly: About once a month: Only when in trouble:

J Regularly looks at web sites for inspiration.

K Did look at books more often in the past.

Appendix 2: Approval and recruitment

Appendix 2.1: King's Approval letter for research.

TO: Timothy Edge
SUBJECT: Approval of ethics application

Dear Timothy,

KCL/12/13-92 - 'Is a Christian's Faith Enhanced Through Volunteering in a Community Setting?'

I am pleased to inform you that full approval for your project has been granted by the E&M Research Ethics Panel. Any specific conditions of approval are laid out at the end of this email which should be followed in addition to the standard terms and conditions of approval:

- Ethical approval is granted for a period of one year from **19th December 2012**. You will not receive a reminder that your approval is about to lapse so it is your responsibility to apply for an extension prior to the project lapsing if you need one (see below for instructions).
- You should report any untoward events or unforeseen ethical problems arising from the project to the panel Chairman within a week of the occurrence. Information about the panel may be accessed at:
<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/innovation/research/support/ethics/committees/sshl/rep/in dex.aspx>
- If you wish to change your project or request an extension of approval you will need to submit a new application with an attachment indicating the changes you want to make (a proforma document to help you with this is available at:
<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/innovation/research/support/ethics/applications/modificati ons.aspx>
- All research should be conducted in accordance with the King's College London *Guidelines on Good Practice in Academic Research* available at:
<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/iop/research/office/help/Assets/good20practice20Sept2009 20FINAL.pdf>

If you require signed confirmation of your approval please forward this email to sshl@kcl.ac.uk indicating why it is required and the address you would like it to be sent to.

Please would you also note that we may, for the purposes of audit, contact you from time to time to ascertain the status of your research.

We wish you every success with this work.

With best wishes

Daniel Butcher – Research Ethics Officer
On behalf of
E&M REP Reviewer

Conditions of approval:

The application is largely acceptable. However, the following issues need to be considered before undertaking the project:

** In relation to the interview location and time, please discuss issues of researcher safety with your supervisor (especially as interviews might be conducted in participants' homes). The following link might be useful:
http://the-sra.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/safety_code_of_practice.pdf

** In the Information Sheet for Participants: (a) It would be good to indicate that the interviews will be 'audio recorded' instead of merely 'recorded', (b) As the research involves discussions surrounding faith, it would be useful to add a sentence clarifying that participants do not have to answer questions that they do not wish to, and (c) You must alter the phrase 'If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason' to include the specific date beyond which participants will be unable to withdraw their data.

Appendix 2.2: Recruitment Email, 1st cohort, 1st interview

Email for recruitment of volunteers. Tim Edge.

Subject heading: **“Faith and volunteering in the community - Circular”**

Circular email for use for recruitment of volunteers for study ref: KCL/12/13-92, approved by King’s College London College Research Ethics Committee (KCL CREC). This project contributes to the College's role in conducting research, and teaching research methods. You are under no obligation to reply to this email, however if you choose to, participation in this research is voluntary and you may withdraw at anytime.

Why are we doing this research?

We are hoping to explore how Christians who volunteer in the community beyond their church congregation perceive the effect of their work on their faith. It is hoped that the results may contribute to discussion upon the place of faith development and lead to further research into this form of Christian mission. Its conclusions might also offer some suggestions for improving the support and/or recruitment of volunteers.

Who are we looking for?

We are inviting those aged over 18 years who volunteer beyond the church congregation such as visitors to the deaf community, prison ministry volunteers or volunteers to community projects. Such practical experience should provide insight into how faith might be encouraged or discouraged by such work.

What will be requested?

We are asking if you are willing to answer questions about your faith and so express your reflections on how your work may or may not have affected your faith. We are therefore asking you to give up about an hour of your time in a single sitting in a place and at a time most convenient to you.

Interested in taking part?

If you would like more information, please contact Tim Edge by email: timothy.edge@kcl.ac.uk or by telephone on 01XXX XX3438.

Appendix 2.3: Information sheet 1st Cohort, 1st interview

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

REC Reference Number: KCL/12/13-92



YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET

Is a Christian's Faith Enhanced Through Volunteering in a Community Setting?

We would like to invite you to participate in this postgraduate research project. You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

We are hoping to explore how Christians who volunteer in the community beyond their church congregation perceive the effect of their work on their faith. It is hoped that the results may contribute to discussion upon the place of faith development and lead to further research into this form of Christian mission. Its conclusions might also offer some suggestions for improving the support and/or recruitment of volunteers. For this research we are inviting for interview those aged over 18 years who volunteer beyond the church congregation such as visitors to the deaf community, prison volunteers or volunteers to community projects.

We are asking if you are willing to answer questions about your faith and so express your reflections on how your work may or may not have affected your faith. You do not have to answer all the questions if you do not wish to. We are therefore asking you to give up about an hour of your time in a single sitting in a place and at a time we will agree with you within the next three months. This research is part of a research project connected with my studies for a Doctorate of Theology and Ministry (DThMin) at King's College London. All data collected will be used exclusively for the subject of research. At the end of the research we will be happy to provide a one sheet summary of our findings.

All data will be made anonymous by ensuring that no true names will be used in the reporting. As researcher, I alone will have access to the original data. You may also withdraw any data/information you have already provided up until it is transcribed for use in the final report which will be by 14th April 2013. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect the standard of care you receive. If you agree to take part you may be asked whether you are happy to be contacted about participation in future studies. Your participation in this study will not be affected should you choose not to be re-contacted.

Interviews will be audio recorded, subject to your permission. Recordings of interviews will be deleted upon transcription. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. The results of the research will be used for purposes of research at King's College London.

It is up to you to decide whether to take part or not. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw from the study at any time up to 14th April without giving a reason.

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact the researcher using the following contact details: Rev'd Tim Edge, 27 Burford Road, Witney, Oxfordshire, OX28 6DP. Email: timothy.edge@kcl.ac.uk.

If this study has harmed you in any way, you can contact King's College London using the details below for further advice and information: Dr Philip Barnes, Reader in Religious and Theological Education, 1/19 Waterloo Bridge Wing, Franklin Wilkins Building, Stamford Street, London. SE1 8WA. philip.barnes@kcl.ac.uk.

Appendix 2.4: Consent form 1st Cohort, 1st interview
CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH STUDIES

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.



Title of Study: Is a Christian's Faith Enhanced Through Volunteering in a Community Setting?

King's College Research Ethics Committee Ref: KCL/12/13-92

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. The person organising the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

Please tick

I understand that if I decide at any time during the research that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify the researchers involved and withdraw from it immediately without giving any reason. Furthermore, I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data up to 14th April 2013.

I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act 1998.

The information you have submitted will be published as a report; please indicate whether you would like to receive a summary.

Yes	No

I understand that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me in any publications as I will not be identified by my name.

Yes	No

I agree to be contacted in the future by King's College London researchers who would like to invite me to participate in follow up studies to this project, or in future studies of a similar nature.

Yes	No

I agree that the research team may use my data for future research and understand that any such use of identifiable data would be reviewed and approved by a research ethics committee. (In such cases, as with this project, personal data would not be identifiable in any report).

Yes	No

I consent to my interview being audio recorded.

Yes	No

Participant's Statement:

I -

agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

Signed

Date

Investigator's Statement:

I Timothy Edge confirm that I have carefully explained the nature, demands and any foreseeable risks (where applicable) of the proposed research to the participant.

Signed

Date

Appendix 2.5: Durham approval email

From: POUND M.J.P.
Sent: 11 November 2015 11:41
To: EDGE T.P.
Cc: WARD P.
Subject: RE: Ethical Approval, Edge

Dear Tim, the Cttee has considered your form. I am passing it by chairs action. You are good to go. Marcus

Appendix 2.6: Recruitment Email, 2nd cohort

Subject heading: Proclaiming Good Works: Identifying the Theology of the Christian Volunteer in the Church of England working outside their Congregation.

Circular email for use for recruitment of volunteers for study ref: Stage 1,11/11/2015: approved by Durham University Departmental Ethics Committee. You are under no obligation to reply to this email, however if you choose to, participation in this research is voluntary and you may withdraw at anytime.

Why are we doing this research?

Christians who volunteer beyond the congregation of their local church are taking part in the mission of the church into the world. As a result of their engagement with such mission, Christian volunteers are in a position to help their local church to engage with the world from their unique perspective. An earlier pilot established that the local church rarely grasps what is shared by such volunteers. It is suspected that the problem is that the language and culture in which the Christian volunteers operate is different from the language and culture of their local church community. We hope to show a way to overcome this, then with the volunteers, make a presentation to the local churches in a way that is easily understood. This way, the church may be helped to respond to the needs and discoveries of Christians who work in the community beyond that of the congregation, and so be better placed to support its volunteers and enhance the mission of the church.

Who are we looking for?

We are inviting those aged over 18 years who volunteer beyond the church congregation in the fields of visitors to the deaf community, prison ministry or ex-offender community projects. This is to extend the work and increase the number of responses beyond that used in the initial pilot study mentioned above.

What will be requested?

The research will be in four stages. Firstly, we are asking if you are willing to answer questions about your faith and experiences in your voluntary work. Secondly, for those willing to offer further time, we are hoping to bring the volunteers together to produce a focus group. The focus group will consider the theology produced by the researcher, and develop the study in order to produce their ideas in a way that can be communicated to the local church. Eventually, it is hoped that the researcher together with some members of the focus group will attend two evenings in appropriate churches. This will be to convey the results of the focus group, and invite church leaders and members to engage with the material shared. Finally the focus group will meet again to evaluate the success or otherwise of the event.

Interested in taking part?

If you would like more information, please contact Tim Edge by email: t.p.edge@durham.ac.uk or by telephone on 07XXX XX1059. Thank you.

Appendix 2.7: Information sheet for 2nd cohort



INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Reference number:

Stage1,11.11.15

Identifying the Theology of the Christian Volunteer in the Church of England working outside their Congregation (stage 1).

We would like to invite you to participate in this postgraduate research project. You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

In a previous study it was found that when Christian volunteers work in communities beyond the church congregation, though much can be shared with each other, such settings are perceived as alien to the local church culture making communication with the church difficult. It is hoped that such conversations with Christian volunteers in the context of their volunteering may be examined for theological content and meaning that can be expressed anew in the context of the local church setting. This way, issues that are presented as a challenge or a valuable expression of faith and/or action in a context beyond the local church culture, may be brought into dialogue with the culture and expression of the local church. Through this process, it is hoped that the church may gain understanding and thus more easily offer further ministry and support, enhancing mission.

We are asking if you are willing both to answer questions about faith, and be available for subsequent meetings. In the first instance, we are asking you for about an hour of your time in a single sitting in a place and at a time we will agree with you within the next three months. The questions will end with an invitation to join a focus group with other Christian volunteers working in the area of prison ministry, ex-offender work or the support of the deaf. If you are willing to offer further time, details of the focus group will be given to you. This research is part of a research project connected with my studies for a Doctorate of Theology and Ministry (DThM) at St John's College, Durham University. All data collected will be used exclusively for the subject of research. At the end of the research we will be happy to provide a one sheet summary of our findings.

All your personal data will be made anonymous by ensuring that no true names will be used in the reporting. As researcher, I alone will have access to the original data. You may also withdraw any data/information you have already provided up until it is transcribed for use in a report on which the research will be based, which will be up to four weeks after each interview or meeting. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect the standard of care you receive. If you agree to take part you will be asked if you would be willing to join a subsequent "focus group". If you choose to join a focus group, clearly your identity will be shared with others within that group, and confidentiality will be explained at that point and in the group. You may also be asked whether you are happy to be contacted about participation in future studies. Your participation in this study will not be affected should you choose not to be re-contacted.

Interviews will be audio recorded, subject to your permission, with the option of providing a further video recording of a question or statement you would like to offer towards the research goals. Recordings of interviews will be deleted upon transcription and video recordings after their use within the project. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. The results of the research will be used for purposes of research at Durham University, and should result in a printed dissertation.

It is up to you to decide whether to take part or not. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw from the study at any time up to four weeks after your interview without giving a reason.

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact the researcher using the following contact details: Rev'd Tim Edge, Telephone 07XXXXX1059. Email: t.p.edge@durham.ac.uk. If this study has harmed you in any way, you can contact Durham University using the following details for further advice and information: Professor Pete Ward Department of Theology and Religion, Durham University, St John's College, 3 South Bailey, Durham DH1 3R. Email: peter.ward@durham.ac.uk.

Appendix 2.8: Consent form for 2nd cohort



CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

Thank you for considering whether to take part in this research. The researcher must explain the project to you and ask you to complete this form before you agree to take part. If you have any questions arising from the explanation or from the “Information Sheet” already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

Title of Project:

Identifying the Theology of the Christian Volunteer in the Church of England working outside their Congregation (Stage 1).

Name of Researcher: **Timothy Peter Edge.**

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 11/11/15 (version Stage 1) for the above project.	
2. I have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask any questions.	
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, furthermore, I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data up to June 2016.	
4. I understand that the interview will be audio recorded and may also be video recorded, and that the recordings will be stored securely and destroyed on completion.	
5. I understand that my data will only be accessed by those working on the project and handled in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act 1998. I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study.	
6. I understand that my data will be anonymised prior to publication.	
7. I agree to the publication of anonymised verbatim quotes.	
8. I am willing to be contacted in the future regarding this project/ future projects.	
9. I agree to take part in the above project.	

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Name of Researcher Tim Edge

Signature

Date

Appendix 3: Some sources for questions

1) What led you to volunteer in the community outside the church rather than (or in addition to) volunteering for “church activities”?

(How did the idea first begin, did it predate church? What in particular led you to enquire about volunteering here? Were you invited by a friend, or inspired by a sermon, leaflet, bible verse, comment, or other cause or a mixture and which? Is your church active in community projects? What did starting out feel like? Did you talk to others about this work, including fellowship group and your household, and was their response what you expected? Is there any specific Christian teaching or biblical reference relevant to this work?⁹⁷² Do you volunteer in other community projects outside the structure of your church?⁹⁷³

2) What encouragements feed and sustain you in the work?

(What keeps you going? How is faith shown in your life? How is this work consistent with your outlook on life and/or faith? How has faith helped you to engage with the work, and has this changed over time? Where do you find God (alone; at church; in others; in beauty)? Does God answer prayer?⁹⁷⁴ How do you know what you believe is true? What are the benefits to you of working here?⁹⁷⁵ Are there barriers which hinder the effectiveness of your work here?⁹⁷⁶ Are there individuals or stories which encourage you both pre and post-dating your start?)

⁹⁷² Robert Wuthnow, *Acts of Compassion: Caring for Others and Helping Ourselves* (United States of America: Princeton University Press, 1993), 158.

⁹⁷³ David Jarvis, Fran Porter, Hannah Lambie and Kevin Broughton, *Building Better Neighbourhoods: The Contribution of Faith Communities to Oxfordshire Life*. Commissioned paper, Coventry University Applied Research Centre in Sustainable Regeneration (SURGE), 2010, Technical Appendix, <http://www.oxnet.org.uk/sites/ocva.org.uk/files/BBN%20%20Technical%20Appendix%20%5BFINAL%5D.pdf>, 134-137 (accessed 11:30hrs. 12th August, 2012).

⁹⁷⁴ Robert Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey: Support Groups and America's New Quest for Community* (United States of America: First Free Press Paperback Edition, 1996), 242.

⁹⁷⁵ David Jarvis, et al., “Building Better Neighbourhoods”, Technical Appendix.

⁹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 137.

3) Has volunteering here affected your faith?

(Do you feel your faith to be enriched or diminished by engaging in this work? How would you describe the place of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit in your life now, and has this changed during your time working here? Similarly, your views on good and evil, salvation, human creation – including human potential and self-improvement or life after death – have these changed?⁹⁷⁷ Where do gifting, grace, love, compassion, miracle, forgiveness and power fit in and has your view of these changed? What relevance does reading the bible have to your faith – do you read it more or less since starting the work?⁹⁷⁸ What evidence could you identify to show these changes? How do you feel about your work here now?⁹⁷⁹ Has this role changed you in any way? Has your prayer life or other experiences or practices which affect your spiritual practices, or life view changed since working here? Has church attendance changed? Have there been other changes? Are there people who would have noticed these changes, and if so who?)

4) Can you identify which aspects of volunteering here may have contributed to any of these changes to your faith?

(Prompts from the lists of faith elements above may be employed to remind the interviewee of any changes stated.)

5) Are you now more or less involved with your “sending church community”?

(How important are relationships with fellow volunteers, the church and those whom you support, including finance, and have these changed during the time you have volunteered? Would your sending church have seen any change in

⁹⁷⁷ James M Penning and Corwin E Smidt, *Evangelicalism The Next Generation: Does Protestantism Have a Future* (United States of America: Baker Academic, 2002), 47-63.

⁹⁷⁸ Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey*, 278.

⁹⁷⁹ Rebecca Anne Allahyari, *Visions of Charity: Volunteer Workers and Moral Community* (United States of America: University of California Press, 2000), 108.

you and/or your attendance and involvement since you started this work? If so, who in particular? What do you expect your church to do about the issues you face here, and can you help them speak out if it is relevant?⁹⁸⁰ Is there a social dimension to faith, and is this important to your church?)⁹⁸¹

6) Are there any issues that you would have liked to have discussed that I have not raised?

(Were there any questions which you felt particularly uneasy about or put you on the spot? Are there any questions you expected me to ask which I did not? Are there any further questions you would feel are helpful to ask to give an insight into your faith? How are you feeling now about this experience?)

The questions will end with my thanks for the time and candour which the interviewees gave.

⁹⁸⁰ Penning and Smidt, *Evangelicalism The Next Generation*, 150.

⁹⁸¹ Robert Wuthnow, *Saving America? Faith-Based Services and the Future of Civil Society* (United States of America: Princeton University Press, 2004), 119-132.

APPENDIX 4: Questions

Appendix 4.1: Prepared questions, 1st cohort

A simple list of pre-prepared questions will be put to the interviewee following my thanks. At this point in the interview straightforward answers will be requested.

What is your age? (Your decade is acceptable.) **Male or F?** []

18-20 [] 21-30 [] 31-40 [] 41-50 [] 51-60 [] 61-70 [] 71+ []

How would you describe your employment status? (If employed - what is your employment?)

A (Higher managerial, administration or professional)

B (Intermediate managerial, administration or professional)

C1 (Supervisory or clerical, junior managerial admin or professional)

C1-C2 (Self-employed skilled/admin prof)

C2 (Skilled manual worker)

D (Semi-skilled or unskilled manual work)

E (State income or pension only, casual work or lowest grade worker)

Student [] Where?

Unemployed [] How long?

Do you have family responsibilities?

Single [] Married [] Partner [] Engaged [] Divorced [] Widowed []

Children at home [] (how many? Ages 0-5 [] 6-10 [] 11-15 [] 16-18 [] 19+ [])

Children not at home:? [] Parents at home? []

Do you have a faith, and if so for how long have you held it?

Years Months

For those of faith:

What particular Denomination (faith tradition/life philosophy) do you hold to?

How frequently do you attend church worship?

More than once a week Once a week
Fortnightly Monthly
At least once a quarter Easter/Christmas
Only funerals & weddings. **All same place?**

Do you attend a fellowship group?

How often does it/each meet?

Bible Study :
Pastorate group :
Special concerns group :
Church Council :
Church committee :
Other/s :
(eg support, self help group)

How often do you pray?

Several times a day Daily Several times a week
Weekly About once a month Only when in trouble

How often do you read the bible alone?

Times a day Daily Several times a week
Weekly About once a month Only when in trouble

Do you read any other devotional book?

Times a day Daily Several times a week
Weekly About once a month Only when in trouble

Please describe in a few words what you do as a volunteer.

Thank you for giving direct answers to these basic questions which help me to set the scene with basic demographics and facts.

I will now ask what are known as “semi-structured questions”. These are six basic questions to invite your reflection. I will ask supplementary questions which should hopefully aid your reflection, and offer probes. This way I will have the opportunity to explain what the question is asking, clarify my understanding of your response and look deeper into areas of faith.

What I need is your reflection on the questions: what are you telling me about your experience? There is no “right” or “wrong” answer, and I am not trying to guide any of your reflections to a particular conclusion, but simply look at your response as deeply as I can.

Of course you do not have to answer a question if you do not wish to.

1) What led you to volunteer in the community outside the church rather than (or in addition to) volunteering for “church activities”?

How did the idea first begin, did it predate church?

(Family; socio/political ethos; theological/philosophical outlook?)

What in particular led you to enquire about volunteering here?

(Were you invited by a friend, or inspired by a sermon, leaflet, bible verse, comment, personal experience, observation or other cause or a mixture and which?)

Did you have a Christian upbringing?

Is your church active in community projects?

What did starting out feel like?

Did you talk to others about this work, including fellowship group and your household, and was their response what you expected?

Is there any specific Christian teaching or biblical reference relevant to this work?

Do you volunteer in any other way?

(It may be church or other religious organisations, charitable group or organisation, neighbourhood, union or professional association, political group or an association or group not noted here?)

2) What encouragements feed and sustain you in the work?

What keeps you going?

How is faith shown in your life?

How is this work consistent with your outlook on life and/or faith?

How has faith helped you to engage with the work, and has this changed over time?

Where do you find God (alone; at church; in others; in beauty)?

Does God answer prayer?

How do you know what you believe is true?

What are the benefits to you of working here?

Are there barriers which hinder the effectiveness of your work here?

Are there individuals or stories which encourage you both pre and post dating your start? (eg friends who share the same hopes and values you do? (Wuth "Stories" 53)

Does the work help you grow spiritually? (Wuth "" 55)

3) Has volunteering here affected your faith?

Do you feel your faith to be enriched or diminished by engaging in this work?

How would you describe the place of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit in your life now, and has this changed during your time working here?

Similarly, your views on good and evil, salvation, human creation – including human potential and self-improvement or life after death – have these changed?

What relevance does reading the bible/devotional book have to your faith – do you read it more or less since starting the work?

Where do **gifting** (have you discovered new gifts, or have your gifts improved or deepened), **grace** (do you find yourself being more open and honest with yourself or others), **love** (do you find yourself loving others or yourself more), **compassion** (do you serve others more; do you better understand people with different religious views), **miracle** (do you see more answers to prayer), **forgiveness** (forgiving others or self more) and **power** (do you see healing of relationships) fit in and has your view of these changed? Do you feel **better about yourself**? Do you **share your faith more**? [Wuthnow “Sharing t J” 229.]

What evidence could you identify to show these changes?

How do you feel about your work here now?

Has your prayer life or other experiences or practices which affect your spiritual practices, or life view changed since working here?

Has church attendance changed?

Have you changed in any other ways?

Are there people who would have noticed these changes, and if so who?

4) Can you identify which aspects of volunteering here may have contributed to any of these changes to your faith?

Prompts from the lists of faith elements above may be employed to remind the interviewee of any changes stated.

5) Are you now more or less involved with your “sending church community”?

How important are relationships with fellow volunteers, the church and those whom you support, including finance, and have these changed during the time you have volunteered?

Would your sending church have seen any change in you and/or your attendance and involvement since you started this work?

If so, who in particular?

What do you expect your church to do about the issues you face here, and can you help them speak out if it is relevant?

Is there a social dimension to faith, and is this important to your church?

6) Are there any issues that you would have liked to have discussed that I have not raised?

Were there any questions which you felt particularly uneasy about or put you on the spot?

Are there any questions you expected me to ask which I did not?

Are there any further questions you would feel are helpful to ask to give an insight into your faith?

How are you feeling now about this research interview?

Thank you for the time and generosity in honesty for answering all these questions.

I hope to be able to let you have a single page (probably two-sided) summary of the results towards the end of 2013.

Appendix 4.2: Prepared questions, 2nd cohort

(If second interview of first cohort, start from question “4”).)

A simple list of demographic questions for the participant.

What is your age? (Your decade is acceptable.) **Male or F?** []

18-20 [] 21-30 [] 31-40 [] 41-50 [] 51-60 [] 61-70 [] 71+ []

How would you describe your employment status? (If employed - what is your employment?)

A (Higher managerial, administration or professional)

B (Intermediate managerial, administration or professional)

C1 (Supervisory or clerical, junior managerial admin or professional)

C1-C2 (Self-employed skilled/admin prof)

C2 (Skilled manual worker)

D (Semi-skilled or unskilled manual work)

E (State income or pension only, casual work or lowest grade worker)

Student [] Where?

Unemployed [] How long?

Do you have family responsibilities?

Single [] Married [] Partner [] Engaged []

Divorced [] Widowed []

Children at home [] (how many? Ages 0-5 [] 6-10 [] 11-15 [] 16-18 [] 19+ [])

Children not at home:? [] Parents at home? []

Do you have a faith, and if so for how long have you held it?

Years Months

For those of faith:

What particular Denomination (faith tradition/life philosophy) do you hold to?

How frequently do you attend church worship?

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| More than once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> | Once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Fortnightly | <input type="checkbox"/> | Monthly | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| At least once a quarter | <input type="checkbox"/> | Easter/Christmas | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Only funerals & weddings. | <input type="checkbox"/> | All same place? | |

Do you attend a fellowship group?

How often does it/each meet?

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|---|
| Bible Study | <input type="checkbox"/> | : |
| Pastorate group | <input type="checkbox"/> | : |
| Special concerns group | <input type="checkbox"/> | : |
| Church Council | <input type="checkbox"/> | : |
| Church committee | <input type="checkbox"/> | : |
| Other/s
(eg support, self help group) | <input type="checkbox"/> | : |

How often do you pray?

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Several times a day | <input type="checkbox"/> | Daily | <input type="checkbox"/> | Several times a week | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Weekly | <input type="checkbox"/> | About once a month | <input type="checkbox"/> | Only when in trouble | <input type="checkbox"/> |

How often do you read the bible alone?

- | | | | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Times a day | <input type="checkbox"/> | Daily | <input type="checkbox"/> | Several times a week | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Weekly | <input type="checkbox"/> | About once a month | <input type="checkbox"/> | Only when in trouble | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Do you read any other devotional book?

- | | | | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Times a day | <input type="checkbox"/> | Daily | <input type="checkbox"/> | Several times a week | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Weekly | <input type="checkbox"/> | About once a month | <input type="checkbox"/> | Only when in trouble | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please describe in a few words what you do as a volunteer.

Thank you for giving direct answers to these basic questions which help me to set the scene with basic demographics and facts.

I will now ask what are known as “semi-structured questions”. These are six basic questions to invite your reflection. I will ask supplementary questions which should hopefully aid your reflection, and offer probes. This way I will have the opportunity to explain what the question is asking, clarify my understanding of your response and look deeper into areas of faith.

What I need is your reflection on the questions: what are you telling me about your experience? There is no “right” or “wrong” answer, and I am not trying to guide any of your reflections to a particular conclusion, but simply look at your response as deeply as I can.

Of course you do not have to answer a question if you do not wish to.

1) What led you to volunteer in the community outside the church rather than (or in addition to) volunteering for “church activities”?

How did the idea first begin, did it predate church?

(Family; socio/political ethos; theological/philosophical outlook?)

What in particular led you to enquire about volunteering here?

(Were you invited by a friend, or inspired by a sermon, leaflet, bible verse, comment, personal experience, observation or other cause or a mixture and which?)

Did you have a Christian upbringing?

Is your church active in community projects?

What did starting out feel like?

Did you talk to others about this work, including fellowship group and your household, and was their response what you expected?

Is there any specific Christian teaching or biblical reference relevant to this work?

Do you volunteer in any other way?

(It may be church or other religious organisations, charitable group or organisation, neighbourhood, union or professional association, political group or an association or group not noted here?)

2) What encouragements feed and sustain you in the work?

What keeps you going?

How is faith shown in your life?

How is this work consistent with your outlook on life and/or faith?

How has faith helped you to engage with the work, and has this changed over time?

Where do you find God (alone; at church; in others; in beauty)?

Does God answer prayer?

How do you know what you believe is true?

What are the benefits to you of working here?

Are there barriers which hinder the effectiveness of your work here?

Are there individuals or stories which encourage you both pre and post dating your start? (eg friends who share the same hopes and values you do? (Wuth "Stories" 53)

Does the work help you grow spiritually? (Wuth "" 55)

3) Has volunteering here affected your faith?

Do you feel your faith to be enriched or diminished by engaging in this work?

How would you describe the place of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit in your life now, and has this changed during your time working here?

Similarly, your views on good and evil, salvation, human creation – including human potential and self-improvement or life after death – have these changed?

What relevance does reading the bible/devotional book have to your faith – do you read it more or less since starting the work?

Where do **gifting** (have you discovered new gifts, or have your gifts improved or deepened), **grace** (do you find yourself being more open and honest with yourself or others), **love** (do you find yourself loving others or yourself more), **compassion** (do you serve others more; do you better understand people with different religious views), **miracle** (do you see more answers to prayer), **forgiveness** (forgiving others or self more) and **power** (do you see healing of relationships) fit in and has your view of these changed? Do you feel **better about yourself**? Do you **share your faith more**? [Wuthnow “Sharing t J” 229.] (See next page, with following questions.)

What evidence could you identify to show these changes?

How do you feel about your work here now?

Has your prayer life or other experiences or practices which affect your spiritual practices, or life view changed since working here?

Has church attendance changed?

Have you changed in any other ways?

Are there people who would have noticed these changes, and if so who?

4) Can you identify which aspects of volunteering here may have contributed to any of these changes to your faith?

Prompts from the lists of faith elements above may be employed to remind the interviewee of any changes stated.

Faith: you own or perceived in others	ABCDEFG
God equipping you	ABCDEFG
Grace	ABCDEFG
Healing	ABCDEFG
Virtuous identity in volunteering	ABCDEFG

Bible reading	ABCDFG
Compassion	BCDEFG
Evangelism	ABCDFG
Forgiveness of self and/or to others	BCDEFG
Spiritual practice	ABCDFG

Changing self	BCDFG
Good & evil	ABCFG
Power/healing in self or others	BCDFG
Prayer	CDEFG

Human Potential, own and/or others	CDFG
Salvation, own and/or others	CDFG

God Holy Spirit	EF
Miracles	CF

Creation	G
God Trinity	F
Other Faiths more understood	D
God the Father.	.
God the Son.	.
Life after death.	.

Discernment
Welcome/hospitality...

Have I missed any other faith aspects in this list?

5) Are you now more or less involved with your “sending church community”?

How important are relationships with fellow volunteers, the church and those whom you support, including finance, and have these changed during the time you have volunteered?

5b. What do you want to say to your church about your volunteering?

5b.1 Congregation

5b.2 Leadership

5b.3 How the church helps (gift to you)

5b.4 How the church hinders (barrier to you)

5b.5 What would help you to feel included?

5c. All volunteers questioned in the previous survey suspected that church members were not generally active enough in practical Christian service.

5c.1 Why is action important?

5c.2 What may be a barrier to such action?

5c.3 Would you like to know what other activities, if any, that church members may be involved in, and what would be the best way to find out?

5d. What was the most helpful book/DVD/website/person when you were thinking and praying about issues you came across in your volunteer work?

6) Are there any issues that you would have liked to have discussed that I have not raised?

Were there any questions which you felt particularly uneasy about or put you on the spot?

Are there any questions you expected me to ask which I did not?

Are there any further questions you would feel are helpful to ask to give an insight into your faith?

How are you feeling now about this research interview?

Thank you for the time and generosity in honesty for answering all these questions.

You will be invited to join a “Focus Group” to discuss and share these issues in a wider way that we might present to local church leaders and members.

I hope to be able to let you have a single page (probably two-sided) summary of the results hopefully before the end of 2018?

APPENDIX 5: Focus group

Appendix 5.1: Focus group information sheet



INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Reference number: Stage 2,3,4, 11.11.15

Identifying the Theology of the Christian Volunteer in the Church of England working outside their Congregation (stage 2, 3 and 4).

We would like to invite you to participate in this postgraduate research project. You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

In a previous pilot it was found that Christian volunteers readily share their concerns and discoveries of faith issues resulting from their ministry and work, expressed in the setting of the work. Unfortunately, such settings are perceived as alien to the local church culture and setting. It is hoped that the volunteers' concerns and discoveries from their work may be examined for theological content and meaning that can be expressed anew in the context of the local church setting. This way, issues that are presented as a challenge or valuable expression of faith and/or action in a context beyond the local church culture, may be brought into dialogue with the culture and expression of the local church. Through this process, it is hoped that the church may more easily offer further ministry and support, enhancing mission.

Having already shared with the researcher statements and questions about faith, you are being invited to be available for subsequent meetings with other Christian volunteers working in the area of prison ministry, ex-offender work or the support of the deaf. There will be an opportunity within the group to discuss the level of anonymity that you will feel comfortable with, both as an individual and as a group of volunteers. This group will form a "focus group" to develop, plan, enact and later assess the effectiveness of the process. It is expected to share these plans within two meetings organised at churches local to some of the volunteers. Your willingness to be available to contribute directly with one or both of the church meetings will be welcomed, but not essential. We are therefore asking for a potential time commitment of up to six hours spread over a number of weeks, as agreed with you. We will also be asking you to travel to common destinations for group and church meetings, at a time and place agreeable to you.

This research is part of a research project connected with my studies for a Doctorate of Theology and Ministry (DThM) at St John's College, Durham

University. All data collected will be used exclusively for the subject of research. At the end of the research we will be happy to provide a one sheet summary of our findings.

All your personal data will be made anonymous by ensuring that no true names will be used in the reporting. However, clearly other members of the focus group will know what you have said in the group, though you and they will be asked to keep any information about others confidential. As researcher, I alone will have access to the original data. You may also withdraw any data/information you have already provided up until it is transcribed for use in a report on which the research will be based, which will be up to four weeks after each interview or meeting. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect the standard of care you receive. If you agree to take part you may be asked whether you are happy to be contacted about participation in future studies. Your participation in this study will not be affected should you choose not to be re-contacted.

Interviews will be audio or video recorded, subject to your permission. Recordings of interviews will be deleted upon transcription and video recordings after their use within the project. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. The results of the research will be used for purposes of research at Durham University, and should result in a printed dissertation.

It is up to you to decide whether to take part or not. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw from the study at any time up to four weeks after your interview without giving a reason.

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact the researcher using the following contact details: Rev'd Tim Edge, Telephone 07XXXXXX1059. Email: t.p.edge@durham.ac.uk.

If this study has harmed you in any way, you can contact Durham University using the following details for further advice and information: Professor Pete Ward Department of Theology and Religion, Durham University, St John's College, 3 South Bailey, Durham DH1 3R. Email: peter.ward@durham.ac.uk.

Appendix 5.2: Focus group supporting papers

Announcing Good Works: Bringing the Christian Volunteer into Dialogue with the Local Church in the Church of England.

Dear Contributing volunteer,

Thank you very much for all your contributions to this point in the research project. Listed in the appendix to this note are some of the questions and comments that I have identified as being common to most from the 12 respondents. Please keep all content as confidential, the questions below and the appended information, held within the research group (yourself and others who were interviewed: the focus group) only, and not to other church members. We need to agree what we want to say at a joint meeting.

Now I hope to form a focus group from as many of you as may be able to meet in one evening, so I am happy to host or find a place where we can all meet with least travel.

The aim is to talk together to form a common mind on how we might best express issues arising from the appended comments. From that evening I hope we can plan a meeting with a local church (leaders and congregation members) which may bring about a fruitful dialogue and discussion of what the church may teach and preach in relation to the issues identified. It may be good to plan to repeat the event across two or so churches.

Examples of questions that may guide such an evening are:

- 1) Can our experiences as volunteers be shared in a way that encourages others in the congregation to mission in the world, especially in terms of our dependence on the Holy Spirit, and blessings resulting from action?
- 2) How can the teaching and preaching of the church relate to the “ordinary” questions of faith and thought that Christians regularly engage within their volunteering?
- 3) What might we learn from the “needy” who are supported by the volunteers in terms of their grasp of how to pray when in trouble, and how to meet their engagement with theological thought (or “thoughts on God” or “the spiritual” as they might put it)?
- 4) How do we maintain a spiritual, faithful approach when the culture we are engaging with appears to ask us not to mention faith and has a bureaucratic approach to support?
- 5) Is God really asking me to be involved in the world beyond my own family: how can I have the confidence and the audacity to contribute as a Christian into issues which affect those outside the church?

You may have other questions that could engage the faith issues relevant to your work and the life of the local church, and I should be delighted to hear them.

I hope we could meet and share how we might best put together and evening which enables such questions to be discussed with the church leaders and congregation members. It would be good if this could be an imaginative process, perhaps with testimonies, or, for example, issues raised by more artistic means such as acting, dance, art installations or whatever. The aim is to make your everyday findings of faith struggles in the world something that the church might be able to appreciate and help. The church may even find the process helpful and be encouraged to contribute more to the work, and perhaps even develop mission at a more involved level.

I have attached some data I produced from your interview responses so that you may see what we have all shared. I realise that this is only partial, and as selected through the “lens” of my analysis, but I have tried to do justice to the comments received. At this point, we do not know who each other are, so please consider all information as confidential, not to be seen by others outside the interviewed group.

Hopefully as many of us are able will meet as a “Focus group” when we can address these questions, in addition to agreeing levels of confidentiality, and completing the consent form, a copy of which is attached, together with an information sheet for the “Focus Group”. Paper copies will be provided at the “Focus Group” meeting.

I look forward to receiving any responses, and hopefully arranging to meet as many of you as possible.

Thank you very much.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Edge.

Appendix 6: Cohort interview times

Time in minutes unless otherwise stated.

Interviewee	Interview 1	Interview 2	Only Interview	Totals
A	72:33	62:34		135:07
B	76:31	74:26		150:57
C	72:57	51:48		124:45
D	71:31	45:52		117:23
E	88:49	55:41		144:30
F	82:57	65:50		148:47
G			111:13	111:13
J			70:23	70:23
K			65:33	65:33
L			60:22	60:22
M			52:43	52:43
N			74:54	74:54

Total interviews depth analysis
37sec.

20hrs 56mins

H (58:18) (Clergy spouse, not used as close to clergy)

Focus Group (107:20)

All interview time:
15sec.

23hrs 42mins

Appendix 7: Transcription symbols

Transcription Symbols used and their meaning:

- [] Overlapping speech
- (.) Short gap in speech
- (x) Gap in speech, x being seconds long
- __ Underscore, rise or fall in pitch of stress
- :: Prolongation of previous sound
- WORD Capitals to denote loud sound (excluding start of sentence, all relative to surrounding words)
- .hhh Denotes in-breath
- () Word/s indistinguishable at transcription
- ((xxx)) xxx is researcher's description.
- > < Contains faster delivery
- < > Contains slower delivery
- { } Contains time on audio recorder

Based on David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data, 4th Edition* (Great Britain: Sage Publications Ltd., 2011), Appendix, 465-466. Adding > <; < >; and { }.

Appendix 8: Examples of transcriptions

Appendix 8.1 Transcribed by researcher

1 Interview Transcript Fiona 28th February 2013.
2 Placed me on two-seater settee, with her on higher swivel chair, mostly sat cross-
3 legged, first half with cup of coffee in her hand, second half gave broader gestures
4 with her hands, small table in front of me for drinks. We were in her church office,
5 no one else there, but we were interrupted twice, briefly, and the door banged softly
6 when others left neighbouring offices. The two other office desks had no one at them
7 today. There is considerable staff in that church. Lines 1-36 summary only.

8
9 393. Age: 24yrs. Female.

10 Volunteer, intern with a view to become a student at a local university, or a London
11 one, to study “International relations and anthropology”, and hoped to work for an
12 NGO after that.

13 Single (has boyfriend), no children and no responsibilities at home.

14 A Christian “A follower of Christ”, working in an Anglican setting, and indeed three
15 years ago, full immersion Baptism there, Ashkelon City Church. For about three
16 years. {2min 54} Had been brought up going to a Roman Catholic Church with her
17 father, but mother stayed at home. Her parents divorced when she was ten, when she
18 stayed with her dad (her mother left), but “thrown out of home at 17 years and a half.
19 Regular worship, twice, Sunday, twice Monday, once Tuesday, once Thursday. All at
20 Ashkelon City Church, only church she goes to.

21 Member of SUPPORT (Ashkelon Community Support.) Pastorate, weekly. Member
22 of weekly bible study.

23 Pray several times a day, morning prayer in morning, otherwise pray with others from
24 time to time, and pray throughout day.

25 Read bible every morning and evening, if not too tired.

26 Devotional UCB notes every day.

27 Theological books: always reading one on faith, “When heaven meets earth” about
28 miracles, and one on healing, both by Bill Johnson, also study books on the internship
29 course each week.

30 As a Volunteer: Twice a week teaching: bible interpretation, on various topics

31 SUPPORT department: community outreach to ex-offenders and homeless.

32 Do children’s church

33 Help out at any events; Conferences etc.

34 Attend a 7 o’clock prayer meeting a week (Thursday)

35 Main: Teaching get, outreach do, some admin stuff, but more hands on etc.

36 All since beginning internship in September, (about 5-6 months).

37

38 Now to semi-structured questions. {11min} I// What led you to volunteer in the
39 community OUTSIDE the church, rather than, or in addition to err volunteering for
40 CHURCH activities? So it’s the SUPPORT work, to do with err prisons and so on,
41 but you do a little bit with children’s work [F// Yeah. That] is that in children of
42 Christians, or? F// Yeah, that’s the the the children of the church. I// Right. So you
43 do them BOTH, in fact, you work inside the church... [F// Yeah, that’s only] only
44 errm, only because, (0.5) a, the interns (.) are rota’d (.) into help at children’s’ church
45 on Sunday mornings. [I// Right.] There is a children’s church intern, [I// Mm hmm.]
46 There’s two children’s church interns [I// Mm hmm.] their department is the

47 children's church, but, [I// Right.] most of us (.) help on (.) Sunday mornings. I// So it
48 keeps you linked into church [F// Yeah.] as well on that, even though it's helping the
49 children. [F// Yeah.] And an you go to church twice, so one you can help the children,
50 and the other one you actually go to enjoy the worship [F// Yeah.] F// To receive,
51 yeah. {11min 55sec} I// To rejoice and receive, that's that's good ((quietly)). So
52 you're volunteering, but your main task here is, is the outreach [F// Yeah.] That side
53 of the church. F// Yes.

54 I// Okay. So how did the (.) idea first begin? (1.0) What, what why do you, [F// To
55 do it.] Yeah. Why do you. How did you end up here to [F// Err.] to, thinking about
56 doing this internship and doing [F// The very...] volunteering? F// simple answer to
57 that erm, (2.5) God told me, and some of the people at the same time that He wanted
58 me to do this internship. [I// Mm.] Errm. And specific He told me that He wanted me
59 to do SUPPORT. I didn't have a clue why because, before this I've, never got
60 involved with any type of outreach work. Cause I've only been a Christian, (slap) not
61 that long. I// Yeah. F// Errm, (0.5) So I didn't have a clue (.) what He, why He
62 wanted me to do SUPPORT, [I// Mm hmm.] I would have probably, if it was up to
63 me, I would have gone for prayer or, the prayer intern, or mission or something [I//
64 Mm hmm.] Errm, I wouldn't have said that I would have gone for SUPPORT. To
65 outreach. [I// Mm hmm.] Errm, but He was very specific with that, so, I followed His
66 call. I// Right. F// And that's where I've ended up, and it's been amazing. I// Mm!
67 You say God told you. One is, just to be very practical, how long ago was that? And
68 secondly, in what way? [F// Mm.] I mean was it words through other people, was it
69 just simple .hh ss hh. (.) a sense after prayer? How how does God, [F// Yeah.] how did
70 God communicate that to you? F// ((Slowly)) Err, He put it on my (0.5) heart, last
71 January? I// Right. F// Errm, and (.) I think people start wist, the application opens in
72 about February. [I// Mm hmm.] Errm, but at the time I was living with Brian and
73 Christine Dobson ((Vicar & wife)) who [I// ah yes] are the lead pastors of Ashkelon
74 City Church. [I// Yeah.] Errm, and it's a long story of how I got there
75 ((nervously/shyly laughs – I give short laugh)) Errm, but. (1.0) I was just working a, I
76 was working in a restaurant [I// Yes.] full time, as a supervisor. Errm, and trying to
77 figure out what it was that I wanted to do with my life. And, [I// Right.] well that's
78 the story of everyone's life really isn't it? Errm, but I hadn't a clue. Errm, and err
79 God just put it on their heart and my heart and my parents heart the same time. [I//
80 Oh wow.] So it was like kind-of confirmed twice. [I// Mm hmm.] Errm, (2.0) and err,
81 (.) yeah, wd so that's how I (.) came to apply for it, and then for the (.) department
82 that I wanted to go into, erm, (1.0) that was just one of those things that you just
83 know that God wants you to do when you (.) read over the options, like you see, [I//
84 Mm.] one you just like, you have a, you feel a pull towards it kind of thing. I// Yeah,
85 but you say you you y, there were. I mean "put it on your heart," I suspect that
86 you're talking about times of prayer and just waiting on God, is that, is that the sense?
87 F// Yeah. I// Is that what you mean? [F// Yeah.] F// Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well. I// I'm
88 using my language not yours here. F// Yeah yeah. Well at the time I wasn't really.
89 Errm, I didn't feel like I was engaging with God in prayer. [I// Ah right.] I was just
90 learning about God and really seeking after Him, [I// Mm hmm.] but (.) didn't feel, (.)
91 I don't think I reached the point where (0.5) I was (.) receiving from: I was obviously
92 receiving from God, because I find this when I try , but it didn't feel like it at the time.
93 [I// Right.] Errm. So it's it was quite big thing for me to actually feel that He was
94 telling me to do that: it was one of the first things that I ever felt like that I received
95 from God for. I// Just straight from out of the aether, as it were, out of fresh air. ()
96 [F// Yeah, yeah] F// I guess it just came as (.) as an idea really, like the work, the

97 internship, I didn't know what it was but it just kept coming up, it kept coming up,
 98 and kept coming up. People would ts, talk about it when I was THERE. [I// Mm
 99 hmm.] It just kept coming up in church. [I// Mm hmm.] So I just, (.) one day I was
 100 (.) walking with Brian, and he, and I said "what's the internship? Because I keep
 101 hearing it, and people keep talking about it." [I laugh] {15min 39sec} And then he
 102 said, "Oh it's ..." He didn't really give me much information, but just said, "Oh why,
 103 do you want to do it?" and then I guess he and Christine went on and prayed about it
 104 after that [I// Mm.] ((Strange sound like water being thrown on the floor, or grit under
 105 a moving wheel of the chair?)) Then they came to me and said, "Errm, I I think, we
 106 think God wants you to do to do the internship, you should pray about it." [I// Mm!]
 107 But I already (.) kind of was feeling like I should do it. [I// Mm hmm.] I// Mm hmm
 108 Mm hmm. ((Cough)) And your parents ((that sound again)) do they do they live in
 109 the city? F// They are from the, they're in the () ((well over 100 miles away)). I//
 110 Oh lovely! ((Door creaks open. F//Hi. Man: Sorry ... short question about someone,
 111 she replies: he leaves "sorry" door creaks closed)) F// Sorry. I// Busy churches! F//
 112 Yeah. (1.0)
 113 I// So really we're its, its ((That noise again)) not necessarily on inspiration of a
 114 sermon or a leaflet, or a bible verse [F// No.] its a. But it was FRIENDSHIP really
 115 with Brian Dobson [F// Yeah.] and his wife. F// Yeah, yeah. I// Errm, (2.0) and (2.0)
 116 You said though to me a little earlier it wasn't the ffff not the obvious thing for you
 117 was SUPPORT [F// No.] You'd have thought it would have been something more
 118 prayerful. F// Yeah. I// So what what's that about? Was, was what's. Why the chose
 119 – you sounded quite happy, "Oh well, I looked at it and said, "Yes! SUPPORT is for
 120 me!" [F// Mm.] Why didn't you look at it and say, "Yes, prayer is for me!"
 121 F// Mm. Yeah. Well I saw myself as, as (1.0) well, I think I would have LIKED to
 122 have been. Because I was seeking after God and trying to (.) receive from Him, I
 123 thought I would have got more out of it by, [I// Yeah] being the prayer (.) intern. [I//
 124 Mm hmm.] Errm, but I didn't really know much about the different departments and
 125 what it would involve and stuff. [I// Yeah, yeah.] Errm, (1.0) so I guess that was a
 126 selfish motive (.) really. ((laughs)) To do something like that! [I// No, really,] I// self-
 127 ish, or something to do with where your "self" slots into (.) F// Yeah. I// God's plans
 128 in ways, because you saw [F// Yeah] yourself fitting in that SUPPORT [F// Yeah.] is
 129 what you're saying. You saw, "Oh, that fits!" F// N-no I didn't. I// It didn't! Right,
 130 how did it work then, why did you look at it and why was it attractive?
 131 F// HHhh. I just a fff, felt God (0.5) strongly (.) pushing me into SUPPORT. (0.5) [I//
 132 Mm.] Errm, so as I was (.) working, reading through the options, it was like, "prayer,
 133 I think I should go for prayer." But then SUPPORT was like (1.0) for some reason I'd
 134 be like, "oh maybe hd, maybe I should just (1.5) I like SUPPORT as well: I don't
 135 really think I should," but I just did. [I// Mm hmm.] Errm, and then. In the interview
 136 it was all (.) pretty (0.5) they had (0.5) they had errm x y who who's the head of
 137 SUPPORT and z q, as well, who, she's like, (.) she errm does prayer ministry for
 138 SUPPORT [I// Mm.] so she's quite involved. Errm. (2.0) ((Bell tower chimes hour
 139 outside)) And we also had the, the person whose the head of the Prayer Department as
 140 well. [I// Mm.] Errm. But as the interview went went on, errm, I could feel a desire
 141 that I wanted to do SUPPORT ((Outside chimes continue)) more and more and more.
 142 Like the questions they were asking me, I was like, [I// Mm.] "Yeah, I really want to
 143 do that. Yeah I really want to do that!" And prayer was kind of was like, "Oh I don't
 144 care about that!" ((Clicks heels.)) ((Both laugh, muffled words shared)). Yeah, but
 145 we pray so much. [I// Yes, yeah, yeah.] I// So it's sort of fitted where you were. F//
 146 Yeah. {19min 07sec} I// Were you brought. You mentioned your parents were

147 praying for you. [F// Mm.] So were you brought up as a Christian? F// No. Err,
148 brought up as a [I// That's interesting.] Yeah. Brought up as a Catholic. I// Right. ((
149 Chimes at last stop.)) F// So I went to (.) church () [I// Roman Catholic?] Yeah,
150 Roman Catholic. I// Yeah. F// I went to church every week until [I// Yeah] the age of
151 about (0.5) seventeen and a half? {19min 29sec} [I// Right] I was, I used to play flute
152 in the in the band? I// Yeah. F// Errm, and as soon as I left home, which was at about
153 seventeen and a half, I stopped going to church, because there was no one there to
154 make me

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157 ((The intervening lines give a particularly person history, so are excluded here.))

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186 I// Errm, I've got a question, "Is your church active in community projects?" I think it
187 is very much so. [F// Yeah. ((slight giggle))] I think you've described that a little bit,
188 so that's Okay. Errm, So what did it FEEL starting out as as this eh SUPPORT
189 intern? F// Completely overwhelmed. [I// Mm] I just remember the first day, was a
190 Wednesday. [I// Mm hmm.] Errm. And we had the bible: on Wednesdays we have a
191 bible study with a lunch [I// Mm hmm.] with, errm our SUPPORT members. [I// Mm
192 hmm.] Errm, and err, ((blow out between pursed lips)) just sat there, feeling
193 completely overwhelmed, looking around at these people in the room thinking, "I
194 have nothing to offer these people." [I// Mm hmm.] "God why did you bring me on
195 this internship?" Like in this department. Errm. I jus felt like I was sinking, and I jus
196 felt like I was completely helpless with these people, like I couldn't do it, I had

197 NOTHING to offer them. I had NO relate, like nothing to relate (.) to them, and they
198 just looked so institutionalised, and (2.0) ((Breath heavily in, then out)) But then, (0.5)
199 I went home. And I prayed about it, and (1.0) I felt absolutely fine about it the next
200 day. And. {23min 04 sec} I// So the institutionalised people were being wh- whom?
201 F// Errm. Well, some of our members are quite institutionalised. [I// Mm.] Errm,
202 (1.0) in very kind of set in their ways. I// In terms of...? F// Just the way that they
203 think. I// The way they think: [F// Mm.] and what what institution do they
204 institutionalised into? F// Some of them have been in prison for a long time, [I// Mm
205 hmm.] erm, (1.0) but some of them (.) just (1.0) they were BORN into very horrible
206 (.) circumstances. [I// Mm hmm.] and they've not been able to break (.) OUT of, (0.5)
207 of (0.5) not feeling worth? Or something, I don't know, it's just... I// Right, so it's not
208 necessarily an institution [F// No.] Well the institution of poverty in a way, [F// Yeah,
209 yeah,] it's that sort of. [F// Yeah.] Right. Gosh. (2.0) So, you, that one day was, and
210 then, you said the next day you went in, [F// I felt great.] and felt changed overnight,
211 you felt Okay? [F// Errm,]
212 F// I just felt like God, erm, (1.0) I think it happened like that because I was looking
213 at mySELF. [I// Mm.] I was thinking, "I've got to do this, I'm not (.) good enough
214 for this, like, I've got nothing to give to these people because I don't know (.)
215 anything about their lives [I// Mm.] and I can't relate to them." So then I went and
216 PRAYED:: about it: I can't remember what I prayed. Errm, but I just remember the
217 next day waking up and feeling like (.)5 erm (2.0) I was ABOVE it. ((Tap on floor:
218 with her foot?)) I was, I was above the (1.0) erm (3.0) I don't know what I was
219 above: it's difficult to explain, ((outside, a distance away a high pitched possible car
220 alarm going off)) it felt like I was above (1.5) erm, being ABLE to do it. (1.5) erm I
221 felt like I was ab, I was [I// yeah.] (1.0) there was no, I above any restrictions that I
222 thought were on me. [I// Mm hmm.] Errm. And last, when I was in that, I can
223 remember, being in the room, on the Wednesday, and slowly feeling like I was
224 sinking. And the next day I woke up, and I felt like I was ABOVE everything. [I//
225 Yeah.] Looking down, rather than looking up and feeling like I had to be like (.)
226 trying to (.) [I// Yeah.] do everything and I felt like, the next day I was looking
227 DOWN at everything (.) and I feeling like I (.) could do everything in God's strength.
228 And that, it wasn't ME, God didn't bring me here (.) [I// Mm hmm.] erm, because I
229 could do it the way I was, He brought me here to change me. [I// Mm hmm.] And, (.)
230 I could do it, with Him, and, and that, it's easy with Him. [I// Yeah. Yeah.]
231 I// And, subsequent days... (1.5) that was... F// That's been the case, yeah. I// That
232 carried on? F// Yeah, I've never felt like that again, I've always just felt the presence
233 of God really. [I// Mm hmm.] ((Outside car alarm now much quieter or gone)) (3.0)
234 ((I flicking through papers)) I// There's no other groups you volunteer with at the
235 moment? F// No::: no. I// So what, what, You've given me a clue there really, and
236 this is a natural next question, what encouragements feed and sustain you in the work?
237 In other words, what keeps you going? It's that sense of, [F// Mm.] it's the prayer that
238 underpins it. [F// Mm.] You've just said, that being [F// Mm.] err in God's strength,
239 not your [F// Yeah.] own [F// Yeah.] I think, is it. F// Yeah, that's right. I// A::nd is
240 there anything else that particularly ss supports you and keeps you going, sustains you
241 in the work? F// Errm, (3.0) umm (3.5) Just God. I// Mm hmm. F// Errm, (2.5) This
242 is a really prayerful department, that I'm really happy about. [I// Mm.] on a
243 Wednesday morning we pray for an hour every week, [I// Mm.] together as a team.
244 Errm. I// So the fellowship here? F// Yeah. [I// The fellowship here to sustain you?]
245 [F// Yeah, the fellowship here is, yeah.] F// It's a real whr, it's a real team and [I//
246 Mm hmm.] everybody, everyone is here for each other, it's really great, [I// Mm.] I'm

247 so happy [I//Hmm.] >to be here in this department, I feel like I've got the best
 248 department.< [I// Mm Mm.] ((She catches breath in slight laugh)) {26min 50sec}
 249 Errm. (2.0) An Yeah, just prayer::: by myself, prayer with (.) there's people that I
 250 work with, errm. With the work that that we're doing with these people it's errm, you
 251 don't SEE a lot of fruit. Everything's happening under the skin. [I// Hmm Mm.]
 252 Errm, but every once in a while, you you see a little bit of, of (1.5) fruit from what
 253 you're doing? [I// Mm hmm.] and it kind of just gives you like (0.5) the glimmer of
 254 hope, you know. Sometimes we can feel like it's hopeless. [I// Mm.] And every once
 255 in a while, (.) something, small. It's a small thing in someone's life. [I// Such as?]
 256 F// So for example errm, one of the people that we work with, errm, he'd been (.) in
 257 prison since he was (.) about (1.0) seventeen. [I// Mm hmm.] Or maybe before. And
 258 he'd only been out (.) like (.) he's now, almost fifty, or in his fifties. [I// Mm hmm.]
 259 and he'd been out a maximum of (1.5) three weeks? At a time? [I// Mm mm.]
 260 Maximum. [I// Mm.] And he's been out now over six months, errm, so, and he
 261 doesn't cope well with CHANGE. [I// Right.] Errm, and his benefits got changed.
 262 [I// Ah!] And, errm, that's a really big thing for him. And instead of ff ff. He said
 263 that he was thinking to himself, "Shall I do something and go back?" >Because he
 264 just used to commit a crime so that he'd go back to jail< [I// Mm.] Errm, He just
 265 think, "Shall I go back, shall I go back?" "Or should I stay, should I stay?" And it
 266 was a real BATTLE for him, but he CAME, he came here, and got prayer. [I// Ehh
 267 ehh.] And that was a HUGH milestone in his life. [I// Hmm.] It looks like something
 268 small for us, but that's MASSIVE [I// Ohh Mm.] And it's just, every once in a while
 269 you see that fruit, [I// Yes, yes.] of the work that (.) the prayer and an all that we're
 270 putting into these (.) people [I// ((quietly)) Yeas.] and sometimes it feels (.) like
 271 nothing's happening, but (.) a lot is happening inside of them. I// Yeah! F// They're
 272 not the most expressive of people. [I// Yeah.] As you can imagine! ((Slight laugh))
 273 I// Mm hmm. That that, that's terrific. F// Yeah.
 274 I// I, I mean what, wr, one of the questions: how is faith SHOWN in your life? How
 275 do you, how do you show FAITH? F// Errm. I [I// Or] I// Do they pick that up from
 276 you, maybe? Or even family and friends as well? F// Mm. (1.0) I::: I think my life
 277 looks different to (1.5) a secular person's life. I// Mm hmm. F// So (.) I (.) made
 278 decisions to: Errm, >I was living with my boyfriend before I became a Christian,<
 279 and then, I (0.5) when I became a Christian (.) I (.) thought it was hypocritical to say I
 280 was a Christian with him. So I moved out. And none of my family and my friends
 281 could understand why? And they were like, "Why are you doing this?" And I knew
 282 exactly what I had to do. Errm, So... (1.0) I// And you'r boyfriend? F// Still together!
 283 I// Oh right! Oh wow. F// Not marr, not engaged, not married, but he's, he's at Uni,
 284 [I// Mm.] So, it's all right. Errm. So I think my life looks different, and, (.) I'm very
 285 (.) peaceful. [I// Mm hmm.] I've a sense of peace about putting to everything.
 286 Nothing seems to faze me anymore, as before I would have: little things (.) would
 287 have: ff, I would have flipped out over and would have got a massive (.) mood [I//
 288 Mm] or whatever. Errm. So I guess my behaviour and errm, I've got, I know that
 289 I've got (.) a sense of peace about me that nothing really bothers me anymore. I//
 290 Mm. F// Errm, and, even to my non-Christian friends, I just offer prayer for
 291 everything. I// Mm. F// Errm, like. One of my friends she comes () ((noise
 292 from probably movement of her swivel chair!)) and she comes from an Orthodox
 293 background, so that's very much, errm, don't even think that she probably
 294 understands (.) what language the service is in: it's probably [I// Mm.] Greek or
 295 something, but errm, no Holy Spirit, and I just prayed for her for healing the other
 296 day. [I// Mm hmm.] because she had a inf, irritated larger intestine. [I// Mm.] Errm,

297 (.) and (.) so (.) I prayed for: I just prayed for everything with everyone. [I// M.] With
 298 everyone, {31min 00sec} if there's any anything, 'cause people always tell you
 299 what's wrong with them, I say "do you want me to pray for you? Do you want me to
 300 pray for you? Do you want me to pray for you?" N::ot many people say "no" to
 301 prayer. [I// Mm.] Christians and non-Christians.
 302 I// Right, Mm, eh. So you don't get a NEGATIVE from the non-Christians who you
 303 share your faith with? [F// No.] And it's you you you'll have a talk to them and (.)
 304 you will (.) suggest prayer. F// Yeah. As an answer. F// Yeah. I// Mm. (3.0) Can
 305 you see where the work that you're doing now is consistent with (.) a PERSONAL
 306 outlook of (.) of life and faith? Errm, even pre-dating your, your (.) Christian (.)
 307 sense, or does it all hinge on (.) a new view because you're a Christian? Are there any
 308 (.) elements in your life, philosophy of life, or anything which, which might [F// Eh
 309 mm.] might be there: it's difficult to unpack these [F// Yeah.] things sometimes. (3.0)
 310 F// Errm. (7.0) ((tap on floor with foot?)) I think I've always been quite a
 311 compassionate person. [I// Mm hmm.] Errm, BUT that compassion (.) was (3.0) yeah
 312 ((wistfully)) (0.5) not that was more for (.) errm, not really, I never had really any
 313 compassion for the poor. [I// Mm.] Errm, especially this country, 'cause I just, jus say
 314 to myself, "Oh anyone can get a job in this country," or "even the homeless people
 315 have got houses, you know." [I// Yeah.] Errm, I- just a completely different VIEW.
 316 (1.0) Errm. (1.0) Ad. No I don't think that it, [I// Mm.] that I think that it's just a
 317 completely new (.) way of (.) life ad way of thinking, doesn't (.) really have anything
 318 to do with how I was before.
 319 I// Mm hmm. (1.5) How about things like finding GOD. I've got various options
 320 here, do you find God – You prob. >I won't predict what you're going to say, I've
 321 got no idea from what you've been saying.< [F// Mm.] Do you find God when you're
 322 aLONE, do you find God at CHURCH, do you find God in BEAUTY, do you find it
 323 in others? F// Everything. I// Everything! Okay ((both chuckle.)) Okay, errm. How
 324 do you KNOW what you believe is true? (3.0) HHHH. (0.5) Errm, (5.0) My (.)
 325 biggest thing (.) is (.) THAT. (1.0) The biggest thing (.) is that. (3.0) Well, for me, and
 326 I've (.) never been the kind of person that, (.) thinks a lot about everything. [I// Mm.]
 327 Errm, and that's (1.0) funny that I'm in Ashkelon, because that's one thing, that I [I//
 328 Laughter] don't think so deeply! ((She now chuckles)) I// Yep. F// Errm, (1.5) so
 329 (1.0) when I first (0.5) I became a Christian by doing the Alpha Course at Ashkelon
 330 City Church, [I// Mm hmm.] Errm. And (.) I knew that there was something (.)
 331 different (.) happening in me when I came into (.) Ashkelon City Church, to come
 332 every Tuesday night, to Ashkelon City Church, so. Like, I'd have errm, I'd feel very
 333 (.) peaceful, ((small slapping sound)) [I// Mm.] I just, a different type of feeling (.) I'd
 334 get [I// Mm.] when I go there. Errm, and then, I// How did you get invited to the
 335 Alpha Course? F// My Dad told me to do an Alpha Course. I// Ah right! Right, [F//
 336 Chuckles.] Dad's tried to nudge you in all sorts of directions. [F/ Yeah.] Catholic
 337 church, that didn't work, let's do an Alpha Course! F// Yeah, yeah. [I// Okay.] Yeah,
 338 because HE errm, (1.0) became a Christian (.) as well! I// Ah right: how long ago?
 339 F// That was bout three and a half years ago. I// Through an Alpha Course? F// Yes!
 340 I// Ah right. ((Both laugh.)) (1.0) Err. (2.0) So I've never been the type of person that
 341 needs a lot of evidence. [I// Mm] Errm. (2.5) So EXPERIENCING God really. [I//
 342 Mm.] Errm, (.) is the thing, (.) that gives me (1.0) but that takes a lot of faith. So, I I
 343 kind of, think I had (.) I took it on faith at the beginning. [I// Mm.] Errm. (2.5) I don't
 344 know really, it's just (.) >there's a< (.) there's (.) a lot. It's not important to me, but
 345 there's a lot of i, I've learned by doing this internship, by interpreting the bible >and
 346 some of the teaching that we've had< There's a lot of evidence that points at the Gos,

347 that the bible is a reliable source of evidence. [I// Mm hmm.] But, I don't see the
348 bible as as a evidence. I I see it as a (1.5) as God's WORD, ((slight slap sound)) you
349 know. [I// Yeah.] Errm, (1.0) so (0.5) I just go on faith really, on my experiences that
350 I've had with God, [I// Mm.] {35min 38sec} of, of, of KNOWING that the Holy
351 Spirit exists, because, [I// Mm.] I've experienced it, an I've seen, I've seen healing,
352 I've (0.5) I've seen healing in myself, I've seen spiritual healing in myself, I've seen
353 spiritual healing in other people ((slight slap)) [I// Mm.] stuff that can only be put
354 down to God. [I// Yeah.] Errm, and you can argue that it's not God, you can argue,
355 [I// Mm.] you could argue it: you can argue anything really. [I// Hmm!] Errm, (.) but
356 I just think you're (.) being a bit (.) stupid (.) when you do. [I// Mm hmm.] (2.5) Does
357 that answer the question? I// hhh. Well, it's your answer, [F// Slight chuckle] so
358 that's that's that's that's that's that's good.

Appendix 8.2 Transcribed by transcription service

Beginning on 6th page of transcription:

289 N// Well, I take over because (a) I believe it's what God calls me to do, which
290 always makes it much easier for you if that's the case, so it doesn't, it doesn't seem
291 like hard work. You know, sometimes in ministry, you know, I've seen people who
292 have just kept on doing things because they felt they should do it and it becomes, it, it,
293 it exhausts them in the end.

294
295 But I've never erm, in fact given half a chance, I would go into prison more than I do.
296 It's just that when I retired I said to yyy ((his wife)) that we should spend more time
297 together so it's trying to balance erm (4) you know, our life as a couple with (1) my,
298 my ministry really so, and I, and I suppose it's, it's crazy I've, I've met so many er
299 good people, or I don't know whether good is the right word but nice people in prison,
300 and I think there's a level of honesty and [integrity ...

301
302 I// [Mm.

303
304 N//... that you don't necessarily erm (5) find er (2) in other communities, and also
305 it's, it's a real privilege to see God actually change lives in front of your eyes really
306 and er (3) I've seen that on so many occasions really, and I, and I've seen more
307 healings (3) in prison that I, I ever have in the church and I, and I, and I don't think
308 that's er, we should be er surprised at that because (2) you know, (3) and when I look
309 through the New Testament I can find no occasion, probably only on one at the most,
310 where Jesus actually healed people in a synagogue, he, he did it in the community.

311
312 And secondly he said, you know, 'if you don't believe in what I say, believe in what
313 you see me do', and I, and I just seen so many lives transformed by the way God has
314 actually, (3) you know, (2) somebody comes in on crutches and goes out without
315 them. It's a challenge not only to Him, to the other people on the Alpha course and to
316 people on the wings and, you know, and I, I, I just sense that, you know, that's, you
317 know, when you, when you mix with these communities that God loves, you know,
318 He actually does work in (3) amazing ways really, but that's (2) my observation.

319
320 I// Mm. Where, where do you think that integrity is born from, because you're
321 saying that prisoners have more integrity?

322
323 N//Well, because I, because I think they are stripped of their masks in a lot of way.

324
325 I// Mm. {15mins 30sec}

326
327 N// When you're powerless and you take everything away, you know, the Bible
328 says that we're all prisoners of sin, aren't we? And I certainly am, I mean we all are,
329 you know, I, I (3) and, and so erm the trouble is (2) living in middle-class homes,
330 doing middle-class jobs and middle, we don't necessarily er will admit we're in
331 prison. Whereas when you're in prison and you're locked up behind a bar and
332 everything is taken away, there's no façade anymore, you are who you are and it. So I
333 think it's then, I don't know whether it's easier but it's, you know, I find, I find the

334 guys are much more able then to be honest about where they are, because most are
335 desperate to change their lives and don't know how to.

336
337 They've made bad choices in the past and they, and erm **(4)** and I've made bad
338 choices. So the difference is my bad choices didn't lead me, lead me into prison
339 whereas theirs did, and they are desperate to change that, don't quite know how to go
340 about it, and yet with God's help, His love, you know, He, He just transforms people,
341 and I think they're in, so they're in a place where they need, they know, that they
342 know they need to change. **(2)** Whereas some of us live under erm illusions and masks
343 that we don't. We deceive ourselves that we, we need to change. That's my
344 observation.

345
346 I// You, you almost lapsed into a Biblical quote there.

347
348 N// ((Laughs))

349
350 I// ((Laughs)) so has the, the faith what you, that was a very **(2)** good **(2)** erm,
351 dare I say articulate way of, of saying what's going on, ha, has your faith changed
352 over time or do you think the basic faith, the basic understanding of [what ...

353
354 N// [No.

355
356 I// ... men are has stayed the same and, and where are those changes?

357
358 N// No, I've, I've, I've always had quite a simple faith really, it is that erm **(3)** I
359 believe that, you know, God loves all of us equally and wants us all to return to Him
360 really and, you know, and I, you, you can wrap that up in a lot of theological
361 arguments and what not but to me, you know, that's, that's the basis of my faith, you
362 know. So when I erm **(2)**, so when I look at, you know, these guys, you know, God
363 made them, they're made in His image, He loves them, He can't love them any more
364 or any less, and His heart is for them to ((laughs)) for them to return to Him, and you
365 can, you know, you can wrap all, all that up with a lot of theological arguments but
366 that's the basis of it really.

367
368 The simplicity is that God wants His children to return to him **(3)** and erm, and I think
369 He wants, so the basis of, **(3)** you know, God the Father, God the Son and God the
370 Spirit is a relational one, and I, I just believe that God wants er us also to have that
371 relationship with Him but to transfer that relationship to others. So my, my
372 Christianity is based on relationship; I need to, **(3)** you know, extend that, if you like,
373 love out to others really, and, and, and so that everything comes down to a relational
374 thing really, and I think if you can build up relationship with others and you can treat
375 them as er equal **(2)**, and I, and I think you're probably the same.

376 {18mins 59sec}

377 I've never, ever yet asked anybody, as far as I can remember, why they're in prison. If
378 they tell me that's their choice but I like to treat them as, as equal because I'm, I know
379 that I've made **(3)** very bad choices in my life, very bad. I've hurt people and erm I'm
380 ashamed of some of the things, you know and, so I don't think they're any better or
381 any worse than me, you know. I just think we are, we're all in the same mess **(3)** and
382 if it wasn't for Jesus, we'd all be lost. So, you know, that's I suppose simplicity, you
383 know, that is a simple way of saying, you know, what drives me really.

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I// Hm-mm, so to summarise that a little bit, just to reflect back if I may, you're saying that there's been an element of simple faith, of wanting that equality, wanting a relational knowing that Christ is in that relationship and that's been the anchor throughout that 40 years of, of, of Christian faith and that, and this is a place you can live it out?

N// Yeah that is (2) that it, it, it is true and I mean, I mean it, it, it sounds very, you know, (4) I probably mess it up more than I get it right, you know, you know, don't get me wrong, you know, I'm not this super saint like figure but I mean that's what drives me, you know. We're told to go and imitate Christ, aren't we (2) and I just sense that if, if, if, if Jesus was walking the earth in 2016, he'd be going into prison and he'd be going to the homeless and he'd be going to the addicts (3) and we're told, and yet society in a way shuns those, (4), you know.

If, if you read the *Daily*, you know, *Mail*, this, this, this isn't slander, you know, you would erm, (3) you know, you'd get this, you know, lock them up throw away the key, or the homeless in some way it's their fault they're homeless, or, addicts well, again you know it's their fault, but, and, and to some extent some of that may be true but unless somebody reaches out to them with some sort of generosity of heart or love, you know, I don't see how they're ever going to change really, and I'm convinced that that is where Jesus would go (3) and he'd say, go and, you know, I am a Christian and, you know, my Christianity is based on a follower of Christ so I suppose (2) we need to go where Christ would go really.

I// Hm-mm, so that's the encouragement and that's good; are there any barriers, where, where does that effectiveness become dented or you've had to pull back or, have there been [any ...

N// [I don't [suppose ...

I// ... [anything that gets in the way?

N// ... I don't, I don't suppose er (4) whether pull back, I find the bureaucracy of the Prison Service quite a difficulty really. I (2) I, I spent my life in a commercial world where you just did it really ((laughs)) whereas having to follow, you know, I, I just find, you know, (3) ((coughs)) sometimes the rules around, you know, prison do make it difficult really. You go into prison all of a sudden, you know, it's locked down or wings, you know, the, the, the wing staff have not released prisoners and that can be frustrating really and so (3) that's the negative side. The, the positive side is that my grace levels have gone up by about a [1,000% ...

I// [((Laughs))

N// ... because I've learnt that ((laughs)) however frustrated you can be, you cannot change the system, you know, you have to work with it and alongside it really, but I mean that can be a huge frustration.

I// So grace levels, in what way does grace work in that?

434 N// In, in the sense that I suppose in my younger days I would have challenged
435 [everything ...

436
437 I// [Ri:ght.

{23mins 05sec}

439 N// ... and erm (5) I, I, I find in that, in that sort of environment it wouldn't work
440 really. At the end of the day, there are, there may be, and probably are, good reasons
441 why the wing staff haven't let people off the wing that day. It's er, it may be human
442 error that they've lost the list (3) for the prisoners who should be released. It may be
443 er (3) the fact that, you know, people have been left off the gate list ((laughs)), you
444 know, it's probably all very good reasons but it seems to, quite often, happen at, at a
445 quite a sort of regular erm basis.

446
447 And everything you do has to be sorted of recorded in duplicate, triplicate and, and I
448 (3) and I just wonder if that information is ever used or whether it's erm (3), it seems
449 to me, and this is just probably false but from a reflective point of view, a lot of it is
450 cover my back sort of stuff and, and that can be, that can be frustrating, but I think if,
451 you know, the trouble is you can let those frustrations er get in the way of what you
452 want to do so I've learnt to say, 'okay (3) we'll go with the flow.' ((Laughs))

453
454 I// So, so the grace is grace that you've been able to achieve that but also that
455 what you've achieved is an element of compassion upon the [system ...

456
457 N// [Yes, absolutely.

458
459 I// ... upon the human frailties [that ...

460
461 N// [Absolutely because I think that people working in the Prison Service are
462 working under severe stress, erm they're short staffed, erm (3) I think sometimes that,
463 you know, the absenteeism in somewhere like HMP Nectarine or HMP Vine is 20%
464 or so. I mean they are working under major, major constraints. Each year I've been
465 there I think the budget has been reduced and so I don't underestimate. It's easy for
466 me to go in as a volunteer and, and, and make these comments. If I was the Governor
467 responsible for the prison, I'm sure that I would have a completely different view and
468 also probably make similar decisions.

469
470 And so I, you, you just have to be as supportive as you can of the, the, the people that
471 have to work under these conditions, and I, and I would say that the erm (4) I find
472 that, you know, Governors and staff in prisons in the way to do their best to support
473 you. It's just that they do work under very difficult circumstances, but as a volunteer,
474 you don't see all that and, you know, and I suppose you can be a bit selfish as, you
475 know, (2) you want these guys to be released from the wing and you don't understand
476 why they haven't been. But as I say over the years I, you know, I, I just erm (2) I've
477 learnt to, you know, try to work within the system that we, we find ourselves.

478
479 I// So there's an element of forgiveness towards the system or, or the people
480 within that system who may have made mistakes about the gate or whatever, or
481 maybe on a bad day, you can't say whether it's intentional or not, you've just got to
482 forgive the system and give, give it that, [that ...

483

484 N// [Yeah.

485

486 I// ... that end, end that (2), so there's forgiveness of others in the system and
487 what about forgiveness itself, it's a big issue in prison (3) and Sycamore Tree?

488

489 {26min 34sec}

490 N// Yeah I mean I think erm (9) I think erm (4) I've seen, I've seen many guys
491 lives transformed because er they've er got to the point in their lives when they've
492 been able to forgive. I find that, you know, (4) you would know better than I but
493 prisons, especially male prisons, can be er, er quite a macho (2) er testosterone sort of
494 fuelled sort of environment, and I find that especially in a young offenders prison like
495 HMP Vine, even probably more so than er HMP Nectarine, and when we do the
496 Sycamore Tree course and we talk about forgiveness, there's almost an immediate,
497 well, I could never forgive this and that. But as God's ((call?)) you know, and the
498 Holy sta-Spirit starts to work, you know, for a lot of the guys they do er find in, in
499 their heart that they can erm forgive er some of the hurts of the past (4) and (2) and I
500 say that because I have heard, although I don't ask them, I've heard enough stories in
501 prison now, and if I'm honest enough to know that if I'd, if I'd been part of their story
502 (2) I'd almost certainly be in prison with them.

503

504 In other words I'm not excusing the fact they're there but a lot of the hurts and the
505 rejection that they've suffered in their lives has been a contri-, contributing factor er
506 to them ending up where they are and so for-, forgiveness for them is a big issue, er
507 (4) but I know that in Christ, forgiveness can be releasing and the opposite fact, and
508 the opposite to that of course it can, (2) it can just bind you up and a lot of guys are
509 banged up because er of unforgiveness. And so if you can get to a point where they
510 can either accept forgiveness or they can (2) forgive others, it can be er, er, er a life
511 changing moment, and I've seen that happen on a lot of occasions, but it is erm, (2)
512 it's not easy within that environment.

513

514 I// So the changing self and have you changed along the way as well do you think
515 as you've met more people like that, or are you, would you reflect back what you said
516 earlier about er it's a simple faith and it's stayed, stayed the same?

517

518 N// Yeah I mean I think I'm human, I think, you know, I'm sure there are times
519 when I (2) haven't forgiven others. (2) I suppose, I, I, I mean it's not about me but I'll
520 tell you a life changing moment for me er was I've, I've got four children (3) and erm
521 when they were growing up, my number two son, who now happens to be a head
522 teacher, when he was in his teen, teens, him and I used to argue all the time (2) and I
523 used to take the, a parental father's role that, you know, he, you know, this was
524 wrong, he should come and er (2) erm (2) say sorry; my wife is, is, is er probably
525 much, a lot more intelligent than me used to say, 'look Nigel this is ridiculous you're
526 the parent, you're the father, you should go and ask him for forgiveness' and er I said,
527 'you must be joking,' you know.

528

529 Anyway we had a bit of a, this particular day we'd had this big argument, and I
530 haven't a clue what the argument was about but being males of a similar type, we're
531 in, he's in his bedroom and I'm in my bedroom and there's the landing between us (2)
532 and I'm absolutely furious and Jane comes up and she says, 'look Nigel, this is
533 absolutely ridiculous, you need to go and (2) ask, say sorry and ask xxx to forgive

534 you', and I said, 'you must be joking, he needs to come and ask me', and she said, she
535 tutted and off she went.

536

537 And I did something which I don't do that often but my Bible was on the side of the
538 thing and I just picked it up and opened it and I remember to my shame, I, I looked at
539 it and it opened at the first book of Luke and I, you know, so I knew that was a
540 nativity story and I, and I almost felt this sense of relief. Well, that's okay, that's, you
541 know, and I looked, and I know and it doesn't rarely happen but I looked at this page
542 and it was almost as though the rest had disappeared and there was just one verse and
543 it was two columns and it was about a third down, it was erm (4) and it talked about
544 John the Baptist and it, it just said he came to turn the hearts of the fathers towards
545 their children (4) ... ((Nigel struggles a little to not become emotional or catch his
546 voice))

547

548 I// ((Laughs)) {31mins 24sec}

549

550 N// ... and that broke me and erm I, I, you know, I was reduced to tears, went
551 along the corridor and said, 'look xxx forgive me', and he said, 'it's okay dad, it's my
552 fault' and, and, you know, we became reconciled, and that was a big turning er point
553 in my relationship with my children because I, I could then genuinely say, you know,
554 'I'm sorry for what I've done', or 'I'm sorry for what I've said.' Whereas before I was
555 probably, that wouldn't have come so easily, and I suppose that was a breaking of
556 something in me (2) that God did which actually then of course influences you going
557 forward. So I haven't always been erm a person who forgives easily but I think God
558 taught me something that day that made it easier going forward, if any of that makes
559 sense.

560

561 I// Have you shared that with prisoners as well?

562

563 N// Yeah I do sometimes yeah.

564

565 I// Mm, mm, wow, goodness. (5) Erm you, you mentioned you've seen miracles
566 at prison, what sort of miracles?

567

568 N// Well, mainly of erm, you know, a healing perspective but I have seen sort of
569 er, (2) you know, some amazing ones, like people have been healed of, you know,
570 God suddenly healed, healed people of addictions.

571

572 I// Mm.

573

574 N// But erm, you know, we've seen people come in with, you know, ulcers that
575 they've had for 30 years that God has miraculously healed. People on crutches that,
576 you know, that they've been able to throw away. People with toothaches that have just
577 disappeared, you know, (4) you know, and it taught me something, you know,
578 because I think as Christians (3) and, and, and this well-known phrase, 'how are you?'
579 you know, we don't, we don't really want to know the answer, or that if somebody
580 says, 'how are you?', 'well, you know, I've got a headache, (4) you know, you're,
581 sometimes the immediate response would be, 'well, have you taken any
582 paracetamol?' instead of saying you know, 'can I pray for you?' (6)

583

584 And I wasn't, people at work knew I was a Christian and I didn't, you know, and
585 people would come and seek me out to chat because I think they valued my (5) the,
586 the fact that I had, you know, that my values I held, but I only, it was only a few
587 occasions I actually said to people, you know, 'can I pray for you?' and never was I
588 refused ((laughs)), and, and sometimes I think there's something within us that stops
589 us doing that and erm (2), but I don't find that reluctance within the, the prison
590 community. So I'm more than happy to say, you know, 'can I pray for you?' whether
591 that's on the wing or on a course or whatever, or whatever and erm (5) God answers
592 prayers.

593
594 I// Hmm.

595
596 N// And you must have experienced the same thing as well really.

597
598 I// Mm (5) yeah well, as I say, we're trying to hear from you so ((laughs)).

599
600 N// Yeah. {34mins 26sec}

601
602 I// Erm (3) so how has that, you, you explained really that prayer has increased
603 and why it's increased when you've gone into, and similar to healing and self of
604 others is something that you've seen fruits of. How about a little more the er (4)
605 thinking around that of what God's doing in terms of say good and evil, (5) what's
606 happening there, because people would say, 'oh prisoners, that's where you'll meet
607 good and evil,' this, this, and certainly in their lives, you've talked about a sort of
608 social evil that's led them into a particular [situation ...

609
610 N// [Yeah, well.

611
612 I// ... and if you were with them, you might have done the same etc.

613
614 N// Yeah. I mean that's not, (4) I also think there are people in prison who are just
615 evil, you know ((laughs)), I mean I'm not, you know, (3) I'm, I'm not saying
616 everybody in prison is, you know, this saintly person. All I know is that a lot of
617 people that I come across are people who have made choices for whatever reason that
618 are, that are, are redeemable. Now I also believe actually (3) from a theological basis
619 that everybody is redeemable.

620
621 I// Mm.

622
623 N// I, I, I just think that, you know, for a lot of people, you know, (5), probably for
624 some it's more difficult than others but I don't, you know, I don't think I've ever
625 come across anybody who is (2), I could classify as being (2) evil beyond the pale if
626 you know what I mean. But that me, I mean I don't work in a high security prison,
627 you know, and I suppose there's select-, there is a selection of the people that you
628 actually (2) you actually meet, and I think that erm (4) not in every case but I've, I've
629 been erm amazed at the amount of (2) guys in prison who are prepared to admit that
630 what they did was wrong (6). That's not 100% but I would say the majority (3) accept
631 the fact that they're in prison rightly because of the things that they've done, so that is
632 a good starting point really.

633

634 I think for a lot of us erm (3) we make excuses for our behaviour and whatnot and it's
635 only when you stop making excuses, that you can actually then start to take
636 responsibility and move on and erm. So for a lot of these guys that is quite a critical
637 thing for them. When they stop making excuses, they accept responsibility for the fact
638 that they're in there because of (3) what they did, not what anybody else did, and that
639 the impact that that has on erm not just their victims but their families and the people
640 that they love, and it's when they come to that realisation and take responsibility that
641 they can start to move on.

642
643 Because for a lot of them in order to live with themselves, the same as, same as me,
644 we, we, we, we, we sometimes make excuses for our behaviour because it helps us
645 live with ourselves and avoids us having to take responsibility, and I find that when
646 they get to that point, then it's, then the, they're well on the, the road to then being
647 able to hear that, you know, that God forgives them and, you know, there's a new life
648 and God wants the best for them and He's got a plan for them. But we all have to
649 come to that realisation in our lives, as I did and as you did I'm sure, that, you know,
650 (3) we've messed it up and erm (3) we can't do it on our own, so that's, you know, so
651 that's the turning point for me I think.

652
653 I// Yeah.

654
655 N// Now that doesn't happen to everybody, you know. Some of the guys will (4)
656 will never take that responsibility but I, I feel unless they do, then it's very difficult to
657 move on.

658 {38mons 43sec}
659 I// (7) You've alluded to though earlier to social sin, you know, if you were in a
660 situation some of those guys were in, then maybe you'd have ended in the way that
661 they [did...]

662
663 N// [Yeah I mean I've [heard

664
665 I/[... so how does that match up the social sin as well as personal sin, the person?

666
667 N// Yeah I know. I think (4) look I've, I've heard of many guys who have been in
668 a care system, who have been abused, who have been sexually abused, physically
669 abused, that erm people who they were meant to trust have erm let them down, and
670 with all the associated and so they've, they've come to disrespect authority. A lot of
671 that has meant they've erm, they've opted out of education, a lot have ended up on the
672 streets, a lot have taken drugs to erm to mask pain (4) and (2) also to earn a living or
673 to, to be able to survive.

674
675 Now erm (6) and so a lot of that has driven the way they act and the way they act has
676 ended for them being up in, in prison. So there's this combination that, that what's
677 happened in their background has led them to take a certain direction. It doesn't mean
678 that the direction they took you can say, well that, you know, it's okay to do that, it's
679 just understanding that, you know, we all have choices in life. Sometimes we make
680 good ones and sometimes we make bad ones (3), but you just think that if they'd led a
681 er, if they'd grown-up in a loving family (5) and gone through, you know, then would
682 they have ended up in the place they are now. I don't know.

683

684 I just know that it is a lot of er, I know kids who have been, you know, rejected by
685 parents, thrown out on the streets (3), you know. I, I, I met a young man in HMP Vine
686 who's er at the age of 11 he saw his father rape his sister and then when, when he was
687 9, when she was 9. They ran away from home and they lived on the streets and in
688 order to survive (4) stole, ended up going through the, (5) you know, the youth (2)
689 offending stuff. Now it's not right that they stole but if, if something like that happens
690 in your life, (3) it must have a, you know, that people that you, you should be er, who,
691 who should be giving you a moral compass and should be responsible for your
692 welfare and should be looking after you, abuse it like that, it must affect the way that
693 you act.

694
695 And the trouble is then you, when you get into a, into a certain (3) sphere and
696 especially if drugs are involved, then you're going on a slippery slope, that, you
697 know. So I'm not excusing them, I'm just saying that, you know, I can understand
698 why they end up where they are because of what's happened to them in the past, but
699 that (4) erm, but even, even then, I think they that, you know, they'd still (4), most of
700 them are still honest enough to know that what they did was wrong and erm (5) and
701 not make excuses for being in prison because they know that the, the course of action
702 they took was against the law. It's prob-, it's more from my perspective knowing that,
703 you know, if I'd had a sister and I'd seen that at 11, what would I have done? (5) I
704 may have done something similar.

Appendix 9: Salient word count

	Bibl/e/s/ical	Scripture/s	Gospel	Pray/er	Faith	Believe/	Spiritu/	F
1A	24	0	2	27	24	6	4me	0
2A	17	0	1	19	18	1	9	0
1B	12	1	4	37	35	1	4	0
2B	11	0	0	64	24	4	20	0
1C	14	6	1	18	36	3	8	0
2C	5	2	0	9	22	0	9	1
1D	10	0	0	44	28	10	9	7
2D	10	0	1	25	28	6	3me	0
1E	5	1	0	28	49	7	8	20
2E	7	0	0	12	31	4	1	7
1F	12	0	0	31	26	3	5	7
2F	24	3	0	38	37	7	9	11
G	7	3	0	45	34	13	11	9
(H	12	1	1	21	23	10	14	1)
J	14	0	2	21	41	14	9	1
K	16	3	0	17	18	12	15	8
L	6	0	0	27	18	2	0	8
M	6	6	1	17	39	3	0	7
N	7	0	2	10	24	23	6	20
(FG	0	3	0	8	0	0	7	9)
Ave. = A-G & J-N added divided by 18.								
Ave.	12.2	1.4	0.8	27.2	29.6	6.6	6.8	5.8

	God	Father	Jesus	Christ	Holy Spirit	Trinity	Heal/ing	Love	Comp	P
1A	51	3me	8	0	16	1me	1	3	0	71
2A	16	0	1	1me	0	0	1	7	0	61
1B	43	0	8	4me	18	0	3	11	6	95
2B	39	1me	10	0	2me	2me	8	6	7	67
1C	14	1me	6	1me	4me	2me	0	1	4	15
2C	14	1me	8	1	0	0	6	3	3	2
1D	60	1	6	0	7	2	2	1	1	45
2D	21	2me	17	3	5	2me	4	1	1	31
1E	48	5	5	5	12	3	0	3	6	24
2E	22	2	1	2	2	2	4	3	2	8
1F	91	3	18	1	9	1	18	15	4	9
2F	151	4	6	8	6	2me	25	9	5	7
G	96	14	22	8	8	0	5	12	3	27
(H	47	2	9	6	6	5	5	3	3)	
J	55	2	16	0	8	1	14	1	2	69
K	42	1me	15	1	15	1me	7	0	2	77
L	17	2me	2me	0	7	0	3	0	9	50
M	28	2me	9	0	2me	0	8	11	3	92
N	40	3	8	13	2	0	8	9	1	54
(FG	11	0	6	5	13	0	0	3	1	p65d79)
Ave. = A-G & J-N added divided by 18.										
Ave.	47	2.6	9.2	2.6	6.4	1.1	6.5	5.4	3.3	44.7

	Miracle	Grace	Christian/s/y	Church/es	Fellowship	Evil	Good/ne
1A	0	1	11	101	3me	1me	17
2A	0	0	10	98	1me	1me	24
1B	4me	3	46	107	1me	5	16
2B	1me	10	43	87	0	1me	46
1C	1	9	22	54	2me	11	30
2C	3 (2=me)	5	7	43	1me	1me	22
1D	0	8	17	61	6	0	25
2D	5	0	11	26	8	0	17
1E	0	7	43	69	4	0	17
2E	3	3	10	52	0	5	21
1F	8	14	36	82	3	18	24
2F	3	17	7	86	2me	14	14
G	0	1	34	67	2	4	27
(H	1me	1	11	70	4	2	10)
J	5	18	16	61	6	5	26
K	5	5	21	76	19	0	9
L	0	8	23	69	11	4me	11
M	7	16	6	66	28	7	15
N	2me	5	31	87	5	5	21
(FG	0	0	15	222	2	0	19)
Ave. = A-G & J-N added divided by 18.							
Ave:	2.6	7.1	21.8	71.8	4.7	3.6	21.2

Such a word count can only be very approximate, as it depends on the words chosen at the point of interview. Certainly where a low number of words is used, then there is little information, and for “doctrine” for example, I was the only person who used the word, with one exception in response by Elizabeth (E). Further “forgiveness” was not used directly, but often alluded to, in terms like “paid the price”. “Miracle”, is again a low count: indeed, for participant “M” the word was used seven times, but because it was not a word they often used, and wanted to clarify it! Fiona (F) was more familiar with the idea of miracles. Similarly “mercy” was not a word used, except by Christopher (C), and as a noun in “Mercy ships” by Linda (L), however, the acceptance of God’s mercy was often alluded to. I realised that for the words “fellowship,” “Christ,” “Father” and “evil” I was at times the only person in the interview who used the word, so I noted this as “me”. I ignored the use of the word “father” which did not mean God, and where I had used the word for God in most cases. There is a hint towards the chosen language, or use of specific words by the participants if there is a high number of words used. Those highlighted are therefore a reflection of a high number, bearing in mind both interviews if two were given, and the way in which the number departs from the average number of times used, simply to give a suggestion of the preferred words. “H” was not included, as H was not involved in the same area of volunteering, though apart from their use of the word “Trinity”, something that would flow from their church tradition, a slight heightening of “Holy Spirit” and “prayer” and low on “grace”, the words used were close to the average for the other participants. “P” denotes the number of times “prison/s/ers” or “deaf” were mentioned by the related volunteers to compare with “church”. I looked at the word “Son” as in Son of God, but largely I only used the term, CDJ used it once (1C, 1D), N twice, E and H, 4 times each (1E 4 times, 2E once). No other words were chosen in this exercise, as some interpretation was required for such concepts as “forgiveness”, “identity” or “spiritual practice” and related words.

The top fifteen salient words beginning with the most used are:

1	Church/es	71.8 (“P” (44.7) was used for comparison, see above)
2	God	47.1
3	Faith	29.6
4	Prayer	27.2
5	Christian/ity	21.8
6	Good	21.2
7	Bible	14.4 (including Scripture and Gospel)
8	Jesus	9.2
9	Love	8.7 (including compassion, “Comp” above)
10	Grace	7.1
11	Spiritual/ity	6.8
12	Believe	6.6
13	Heal/ing	6.5
14	Holy Spirit	6.4
15	Forgive/ness	5.8 (“F” in above list)

Under 5.0 has even less meaning as a statistic.

Love would go to number 15 if “compassion” were not included, Bible would remain at number 7 if scripture and Gospel were not included.

Appendix 10: Examples of coding for analysis

Forgiveness

N 10 Prisoners also hurt by their past and need to forgive others (root of their sin?).
K10 K12 Sycamore Tree L18 sycamore Tree M17 N9 Forgiveness of staff and system too N10 Prisoners need to forgive the hurts to them of the past. N20 I need to say sorry to others, I realise.

2C 12 “Forgiveness, acceptance, welcoming people back... somehow finding where it is that you do have to set some boundaries.” Discernment, and legal obligations. “We accept you and we’re less judging than other people but it doesn’t mean you can get away with anything, particularly if it affects the people around you.”

2F 20/21 “going erm into the prisons erm and working with ex-offenders, that definitely helps to be able to forgive others, because I remember erm there was a, the case... now when I hear of really bad cases in the news, I would used to, like somebody like a paedophile or like murderers I would, I would, in my head I would condemn then. I would be like, that person needs to go to hell.

But now ((laughs)) since I’ve been work... since doing the volunteering it’s like erm kind of has opened up my mind to more the way that God would think of that person, like that person is a child of God, made by God, to be in a relationship with God, and actually is forgiven. All they have to do is ask for forgiveness and they’ll be forgiven and it will washed away, so who am I to judge that, to judge anybody? I’m not...

I think it’s actually seeing the working out of the forgiveness in their lives.”

1G 1008-1034 Forgiveness, growing in him, but painful and a struggle.

Prayer

J14 Fasting and praying produces “marvellous results” and 15

L10 To see change in people

2B 552-557 I pray so much for the needs of the men, which are so great, I have stopped praying for myself.

2B 575-584 Difficult to pray for the homeless, because they pray for their plight in so much better a way than I could, they do it with reality.

2B 838-843 “I always pray... I ask for... one good encounter where I can make a difference... and it’s always amazing.” That’s enough to get her through, despite many disappointments.

2E 326-332 I sometimes feel I have to pray, sometimes people ask for prayer, and that is good too.

2F 16 “I expect when I pray with people to see results, and I, and, and when, when you have that mentality, it does look onto your faith that will be given to you.”

2F 19 “prayer and reading the Bible are the two most important aspects of your faith and they’re the things that will develop you.”

2F 23 “I think it’s just being able to put it into practice, just erm, just having the opportunity to be able to pray with people, like people erm accepting prayer really, it’s like offering to pray with people and, and, and when you’re volunteering then the frequency of that is very increased.

I mean in one, in one prayer meeting, in one Alpha course in a prison, you can pray with God knows how many people. I don’t know how many people are there, but in a week of going to uni or going to work, you might pray with one or two you know. So it’s just the frequency of doing it, it just allows everything to build up and for you to get confident and strong and you know.

... erm I think, well, all, all I, all I want is to see really all, really yeah, all I really want is just to see God's manifestation in peoples' lives and God is power and healing in his love. So, so, so through the volunteering yeah that... well, I think, I think when you're volunteering, you get to pray with people more and, and I do believe that with, with erm healing, it is to do with numbers as well because not everybody gets healed so you have to pray with more; if you want to see God's healing then you pray with more people. Because not everyone that you pray with gets healed, you don't know what that person is going through at the time and their circumstances and blah de blah, blah, there are a lot of things going on in peoples' lives."

1G 1057-1098 Prayer has been used and works: he is still amazed by it. The more he does it, the more it strengthens his belief.

Bible

J14 God found in bible. J15 God's strength in bible.

J31 Bible belief = not evolution

K11 ditto

M6d-8 Bible quotes list.

2D 11 I took on the responsibility of ordering the bible notes for prisoners, it's so important that they can read the bible in their cell and be present with God that way.

2F 18 I read the bible more, as I need to quote scripture when volunteering.

2F 19 "prayer and reading the Bible are the two most important aspects of your faith and they're the things that will develop you." "And the, the word of God renews your mind and it changes you erm and it gives you strength - I've from my own experience learned that it gives me strength and it helps me to walk in, in God's spirit. So when you're out, out volunteering, when you, or if you, yeah just when you, when you know that you're going to be doing God's work, you really want to be walking in his spirit and - you know that reading, reading the words strengthens you in that, and it puts you in the right frame of mind as well, you, you need to be dependent on it I think."

2F 21/22 "I think it goes, it's the same as the Bible, the reading the Bible, because you need to be in tune with God, you really need to be open to hearing his word to, to yeah spiritual, to having your spiritual eyes and ears open, erm because it's -"

TE: Trying to keep the conduit clean as it were to?

F: "Well, yeah I mean it's wonderful to erm, to be able to give someone a message from God, or to give someone a scripture from God and say, 'yeah I really feel like God wants to say this to you', and when you see it touch that person, but if you're not, if you haven't really been reading the Bible and spending time with God, well, I noticed a big difference in, in what I can hear God saying to me, erm and, and like yeah in the way that he communicates with me.

I think he's still communicating exactly the same way with me but it's me, I'm blocked, because I haven't been disciplined in, in spending the time in his presence and reading the word and, so I think, I just think that you're dependent... you depend on it, you know, you, and you feel the difference. When you know, when you've got to a certain level and then you backslide, you can feel it and you think, oh I need to be back up there."

1G 667-672 Matthew's Gospel, scriptural requirement to do things in the community, and this encourages faith, doing scripture. Look after the widows...

Grace

J24 particular gift to her

K18 L23

2B 196-218 It's therefore not about being good that makes you a Christian, it's about grace. "I've had to sort of, re-evaluate" (213/214).

2B 333-348 I was the token "mother" for prisoners on Mother's Day, when so many thought of their mothers, and that was both hard and a grace: I could respond to them as if their mother.

2B 603-613 An offender had his children taken into care, was blocked from seeing them: such hurt to him. I was a foster carer, she said, so she could talk to him about it: grace.

2C 8 "God has grace that can accept anyone and chooses to go looking for unlikely people, and, yes, I think we should be a bit the same.

2F 16 "like I definitely see the grace of God erm and how He pours that out on his people, and then that, that in turn will change you from the inside out, erm but I don't know really what to say about that at the moment." And God pours out grace on "people that we might deem unworthy." This is especially seen in prison ministry.

2G 672-728 Not by my own strength, but God, or walking with Jesus, or the Holy Spirit, there is grace and grateful people, yet not by my strength.

Holy Spirit

K13 equip and gifts

L9/10 inspire and guide

Language:

J21 Her dislike of "bad language" by prisoners: using JC as a swear word...

N6 Levels of honesty/integrity are high in prison (emotional?)

N8 "Daily Mail" condemnation of prisoners vs. God with me reaching out in love.

2E 181-213 Language: of the C of E and what it communicates: attitude to women, ie women Bishops, to Gay people, may marginalise and make other marginalised groups avoid it, and a language which is acceptable to its "regulars" but we need to be sensitive to what our attitudes and language communicates to others. Notice the person left out, an appropriate welcome and invitation to stay for coffee, not just to "people like us."

2F 20 "through volunteering you, you just become accustomed and you learn the language" Language as in "how to communicate Christ." You need to communicate it in a way that they can receive it, but "I think that's the same language with everybody because we're all, you communicate to the spirit."

1G 1099-1117 "I've had moments where, I've wanted a sabbatical. I've been a bit CHURCHED out. Maybe stop for a week or two, or a month or whatever. Just had a little time out, 'cause of all the church SPEAK, and all the church (.) sort a, (.) you know, all the stuff around it. Like, I d'know, it's weird, sometimes, we all talk this language, and we all, say these things in or around each other. And sometimes I just don't feel it. I just: I want to get away from that, I wanta go, no I wanta go back in me cave, if you like. I wana just go and HIDE, in me little cave. Just hang out with Jesus. I// Mm. G// 'Cause I don't have to give Him, "God bless you." And der der der, an der der der. And, all the, palaver. I can just be REAL with Him. I can talk to Him like I talk to YOU. Probably a bit more explicit actually ((we laugh)) Emm. An I just go through that process, so yeah I say at least, I think I'm having a bit o (.) one of them right now. I// Mm. G// I just wan a bit of time."

Appendix 11: Scriptures quoted or alluded to

- Matthew 5 v6 (Blessed are those who thirst for righteousness) B17
Matthew 6v3 (not letting left hand know what right doing) D (quizzically).
Matthew 25 v34-45. (You cared for prisoners...) D G M N3 (not B!)
Matt 7 v7-8; Luke 11 v 9-10. (Ask and it will be given) A.
Matt 13 v9. (Ears to hear) F.
Matt 14v23/Mark 1v35; 6v46; 11v25; Luke 5v6; 6v12; 9v18; 9v28.
(Apart to pray) A.
Matt 26 v6-13/Mark 14 v3-9. (Anointing for forgiveness) K.
- Luke 1v17 (Turn the hearts of the fathers towards their children) N10.
Luke 7 v44-50 (Washing Jesus feet) F K.
Luke 10 v25-37 (The Good Samaritan) E.
Luke 10 v38-42 (Mary & Martha) K.
- John 10 v10. (For destroyer or giver of abundant life) F.
John 14 v6 (I am the way, the truth and the light...) N16.
John 14 v27 (My peace I leave with you) A.
“Love of Jesus” shown throughout the Gospels. B N7.
- Acts 6 v1-6. (Those chosen to serve widows etc.: Stephen etc.) A2.
Acts 8 v26-40 (Baptism as faithful response) G8.
Acts 23 v22-43 (They (clients) worship the unknown God) D.
- 1Cor 10 v13. (Not tempted beyond your capacity) E.
2Cor 3 v18 (We are being changed... glory to glory) N7.
- Galatians 5 v22-23 (Fruits of the Spirit) J23/24.
- Ephesians 2 v10 (walk on water) G14.
- James 1 v27. (Look after orphans and widows etc.) F.
James 4 v7-8. (Resist the devil, come near to God, and God will come near) C M21.
- Genesis 1 & 6 (Creation (and flood (K)) B J31 K11.
- 1Samuel 17 v32-51 (David & Goliath: undefended, but God was with him) M15.
- Nehemiah. (Starts by building a wall, ends up helping others) 1C1, 54-158.
- Psalms 23 (The Lord’s my shepherd) B17/18.
Psalm 91 (God has a plan and blessing) D15.
- Proverbs 11 v8-9. (Godlessness destroys, godliness rescues) M7.
- Isaiah 53 v4-5. (Took our infirmities, pierced for us) F.
- Hosea 4 v6. (Lack of knowledge destroys my people) F.
- Micah 6v8. (Lord requires of you: act justly... love mercy...) C.

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