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# **The Inclusivity of Rural Anglicanism: Theoretical and empirical considerations**

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## **Acknowledgements**

This programme of research began with the simple aim of rekindling an interest in academic research that had lain dormant since my days as a mathematician. Working in a diocese with a significant rural element, after spending my earlier ministry in a mostly urban one, I felt the need to build up my understanding of rural society and the rural church to be a more effective bishop, that task gave focus to the work. The Rt Revd Dr Peter Selby, then Bishop of Worcester, encouraged me, and made it clear that the time spent was well worth it. In preparation for my first sabbatical I made contact with Professor Leslie Francis, then at Bangor, who kindly agreed to guide me in my efforts. I was very clear that I had neither the time nor the inclination to aim for further academic qualification, but simply wished to indulge in research led reflective practice that I might be able to share with clergy and others to the betterment of our ministry and mission.

Having started, I found it impossible to stop. The early development of a theoretical model of how belonging works in the countryside needed to be tested with real data, and my twin disciplines of theology and mathematics came together in the field of empirical research. The work developed with a second survey in 2009; the theoretical model continued to provide a basis both for identifying questions and for understanding what was being observed. Opportunities to attend seminars and conferences, particularly of the International Society for Empirical Research in Theology, the Centre for Studies in Rural Ministry, and the St Mary's Centre Annual Symposium in Practical Theology and Religious Education, have helped me to find colleagues willing to offer constructive criticism and support. The chance of a second sabbatical in 2012 led to the suggestion that the body of published research I had by now produced would benefit from being collected together, subjected to further reflection, and offered as the basis for a doctorate by published works.

I am hugely grateful to all who have supported me: to the clergy of the Diocese of Worcester and to the Very Revd Peter Atkinson, Dean of Worcester and the Chapter of Worcester Cathedral who kindly allowed me to use their services as occasions for collecting the data; to The Rt Revd Dr John Inge, the present Bishop of Worcester, who continued the support of his predecessor; to Dr Mandy Robbins who has always ensured the data are accurately coded and entered and to Dr Emyr Williams who has taught me how to use some of the more powerful tools in the statistician's box; to Professor Chris Lewis, Dr Tania ap Sion, and Dr Gareth Longden, all of Glyndŵr University, for much support and help along the way, including the kindness of my being made a senior visiting fellow. But above all I am indebted to Professor Leslie Francis for his unstinting support, advice and encouragement at every stage of the process, and indeed, for his friendship.

### **Declaration**

All of the published work included here is entirely my own with the exception of the one co-authored paper: Walker, D. S. , Francis L. J. , & Robbins M. (2010). You don't have to go to church to be a good Christian: The implicit religion of rural Anglican churchgoers celebrating harvest. *Implicit Religion*, 13(3), 319-325. This latter is a combined work which is based on the data I collected and of which I was the principal author.

## Author's Foreword

In this series of published papers I have set out to explore in a systematic way how theoretical and empirical considerations can analyse and illuminate the current condition of the Church of England in rural areas. My thesis is that, within an Anglican view of inclusivity, the rural Anglican Church embraces a diverse range of people who express their Anglican identity and their sense of belonging to the Anglican Church in a variety of ways.

The idea for this area of research emerged in response to the influential study by Cray and others *Mission Shaped Church* (Archbishops' Council, 2004). This book promoted an understanding of church belonging in England as one which was increasingly moving away from notions of the local community towards those of the social network. At around the same time Robert Putnam published his study of social capital in the USA, *Bowling Alone* (Putnam, 2000), which evaluated and distinguished between the bonding and bridging social capital created and sustained by those belonging to community organisations such as churches.

Cray's work advocated various ways in which churches could respond to the opportunities provided by network belonging. It led to the launch of many church activities, often denoted by the term Fresh Expressions of Church, which have demonstrated the value of the model. It appeared, however, to be having more effect in churches in those city centre and suburban areas where the sense of local geographical belonging was lesser than elsewhere. At the same time Putnam's work was being picked up by churches in the inner cities and deprived social housing estates as it described the pattern of social engagement in a localised area in ways which gave a rationale for the church's involvement in initiatives for urban regeneration. The language and theory of social capital was taken up at national level in the joint Anglican and Methodist report *Faithful Cities* (Archbishops' Council,



2006). In each case, whilst there were clearly applications of the theory to the rural context, the analysis was predominantly of urban and suburban society. This suggested that a systematic study of church belonging that was rooted in the countryside might both assist understanding of that distinct context and also offer observations relevant to churches in other places.

## **Inclusion of Published Work**

The following eleven published works form the basis of the work reflected on in this submission

Walker, D. S. (2006). Belonging to rural church and society: Theological and religious perspectives. *Rural Theology*, 4(2), 85-97.

Walker, D. S. (2004). Private property and public good. In J. Martineau, L. J. Francis, and P. Francis (Eds.), *Changing rural life: A Christian response to key rural issues*, (pp. 79-98). Norwich: Canterbury Press.

Walker, D. S. (2009). The social significance of Harvest Festivals in the countryside: An empirical enquiry among those who attend. *Rural Theology*, 7(1), 3-16.

Walker, D. S. (2010). The religious beliefs and attitudes of rural Anglican churchgoers: Weekly and occasional attendees. *Rural Theology*, 8(2), 159-172.

Walker, D. S. (2008). Communion by extension: discrepancies between policy and practice. *Rural Theology*, 6(1), 11-25.

Walker, D. S. , Francis L. J. , & Robbins M. (2010). You don't have to go to church to be a good Christian: The implicit religion of rural Anglican churchgoers celebrating harvest. *Implicit Religion*, 13(3), 319-325.

Walker, D. S. (2011). Personal prayer, church attendance and social capital among rural churchgoers: Quantitative empirical methods as a tool for mission and ministry. *Rural Theology*, 9(1), 39-47.

Walker, D. S. (2012). O come all ye thinking types: The wider appeal of the cathedral carol service. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 15(10), 987-995.

Walker, D. S. (2012). Measuring the New Indices of Religious Orientation at the cathedral carol service: Internal consistency and reliability among a distinctively wide ranging sample. *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, 33(1), 117 – 122.

Walker, D. S. (2012). Attending the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols at a rural cathedral: An empirical study in religious orientation and motivational style. *Rural Theology*, 10(1), 56-69.

Walker, D. S. (2010). Marks of Mission and ways of belonging: Shaping the Anglican agenda for occasional churchgoers in the countryside. *Journal of Anglican Studies*, 9(1), 100-116.

## **Abstract**

This thesis presents a reflection on a series of published papers which explore in a systematic way how theoretical and empirical considerations can analyse and illuminate the current condition of the Church of England in rural areas. A fourfold model of belonging through activities, events, people and places is set out and two large data samples are studied. Particular attention is paid to those who attend Church of England services, but on only a few occasions each year.

The chapter structure of the thesis illustrates the progressive nature of the research and demonstrates how the component parts come together to form a cumulative and coherent case. As well as demonstrating the validity of the belonging model, implications for the governance of the Church of England and for its income generation model are drawn out and made more explicit than in the original papers. The missional implications for a church that has adopted a model led by a dominant “activity” theme are considered.

The power of a cumulative study using a range of empirical tools is shown. It is concluded that, within an Anglican view of inclusivity, the rural Church of England embraces a diverse range of people who express their Anglican identity and their sense of belonging to the Church in ways that can now be better understood.

## **Part 1**

### **Establishing the context**

For the first part of the research I needed to develop an understanding of the rural church and those associated with it.

#### **1.1**

##### **Ways of belonging: a theoretical model**

In her influential book, *Believing without Belonging*, Davie (1994) had propounded the theory that Christian faith in Britain since 1945 was characterised by a persistence in belief but a collapse in belonging to the organised church. This seemed however to be predicated on a definition of belonging that did not readily accord with either the ecclesiology of an established church which has no formal membership lists (Electoral Rolls not claiming such a function) nor the data from the 2011 census which showed a significant majority (over 59%) of the population declaring themselves to be Christian. The work of Francis and others (see, for example, Francis and Robbins, 2004) had, more in line with the census, taken “self-defined affiliation” as its definition of belonging and examined that in relation to both belief and church attendance. If the definition of Davie was too narrow, then that of Francis posed the question as to how such belonging might be lived out in practice. In terms of the overall research question, how far is the rural Anglican church able to include

those who define themselves as “Church of England” but are not characterised by frequent church attendance? Appendix 1, first published as Walker (2006), begins addressing that theme.

In undertaking this work it emerged that the question of how people belong would be better understood by a prior consideration of who it was who was belonging, and that belonging to the rural church would be best placed within the understanding of more general rural belonging. Observation of rural parishes across an English county made it possible to identify and give descriptive accounts of twelve types of individual who could claim a sense of belonging to a rural community. This model has had impact in a number of ways. As well as facilitating investigation of modes of belonging that might be appropriate to each type, the characterisations proved very useful as the research developed in shaping the questions that formed the first survey (Harvest, see Appendix 11) so as to ensure that they embraced the fullest possible range of those who belong in the countryside. More generally, the use of characterisations in this way is central to the model of religious orientation which was utilised towards the end of the research programme (see appendix 9). Since its publication, the model has been taken up by those involved nationally in training clergy for rural ministry. Characterisation also allowed consideration of those who are involuntarily absent from the countryside. Finally, it uncovered the notion that there is a sense of belonging which connects the countryside with the British public at large; this became a central concept in appendix 2.

Reflection on this categorisation led to the proposal of a model of belonging in the countryside which could then be developed in terms of the particular ways in which individuals belong with the church. Four categories were described. “Activity” belonging was defined as participation in some regular occurrences which took place sufficiently

often to engender an expectation that attendance on each occasion was part of a larger commitment; these would typically include weekly Sunday Services, monthly Family Worship, Mothers' Union, church home group or being a member of a church council. "Event" belonging was defined as a pattern of attendance at "one off" occasions such as Christmas, Easter, Mothering Sunday as well as the occasional offices of weddings, baptisms and funerals. "People" belonging was defined as mediated through relationships such as an individual's sense of connection to the local priest or to another person associated in their mind with the church and Christian faith. "Place" belonging was defined as a person's connections to the church building, churchyard or some other aspect of the locality.

Before testing out this model on the rural context it was necessary to see to what extent each of these categories is found in and supported by the Christian tradition. Two key theological principles were found to underlie the model; firstly, that all Christian belonging is rooted in belonging with God and secondly that (in consequence of this) belonging differs from ownership in that it is mutual rather than unidirectional. This latter principle was to prove central to the development of the argument in appendix 2, more generally it suggested a preference for the language of "belonging with" rather than "belonging to". This theological section of the paper was relatively short as it proved straightforward to link the four dimensions of the model to central expressions of belonging in both the Old and New Testaments. The fact that all four dimensions of the model are well supported by the theological tradition suggested that all four are valid dimensions of Christian belonging. The links between belonging and place, very well demonstrated by Brueggemann (2002) in terms of the Old Testament, have been more clearly described in terms of the Christian tradition by the work of Inge (2003) of which I was not aware at the time of writing. It has been possible to incorporate some of his findings in later papers. The

place dimension could also have benefitted from a brief reference to the importance of particular locations (e.g. Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Rome) in the writings of St Luke. The success of the model in setting an agenda for enquiry through the remainder of this research programme suggests that there would be value in going back to the theological underpinning and extending it to the length of a full paper, with a comprehensive literature review and incorporation of the key empirical findings of the later papers as they relate to the model. Indeed, reflection on the whole body of research in this submission leads me to conclude that a key contribution which Empirical Theology makes in a field more widely dominated by Sociology of Religion is that, without sacrificing objective enquiry, it allows both for theological constructs to give shape to the questions asked and for the interpretation of research findings for practical application.

Having constructed the model it was then possible to use it to describe a range of elements of rural Anglicanism and church life, with particular reference to the twelve categories of people with connections to the countryside. The model proved useful in being able to identify possible areas for mission, to offer guidance as to effective pastoral practice, to inform the local church response to opportunities offered by government or other external sources and for understanding how conflicts around belonging occur in the church. In particular it highlighted that the Mission Shaped Church model was almost exclusively focussed on encouraging and increasing opportunities for activity belonging. It may be relevant that since the publication of this work some significant effort has been made by the Archbishops' Council to promote the ministry of the Church of England through one off events. The successful roll out of the "Weddings Project" (see [yourchurchwedding.org](http://yourchurchwedding.org)) has been followed by an announced intention to do similar work on the place of baptisms and then funerals.



Finally, the model raised a number of questions that merited further enquiry, including: the value that rural residents, whether commuter or indigenous, place on the local church and the worship and prayer for which it provides; the contribution of local faith groups to community vibrancy; the potential for local faith groups to make a full contribution to the inclusivity of the rural society. These were picked up in later stages of the research.

## **1.2**

### **Exploring the context**

The three papers forming appendices 2, 3 & 4 of the present submission build on the model set out above and explore the context of the rural Anglican Church from different perspectives. The first, originally published as Walker (2004), broadened the understanding of the relationship between individuals and the countryside. The second, originally published as Walker (2009), began to prove the value of the model through an initial quantitative study into how individuals relate to their community and church. The final paper, originally published as Walker (2010a), started the process of distinguishing between frequent and occasional churchgoers, establishing sufficient differences as to warrant deeper investigation using the methods and tools that form the remainder of this series of published works.

## **Part 2**

### **Testing Theory**

The first part of this research project proposed and tested a model for belonging that offered a way to explore the inclusivity of rural Anglicanism. The second part of the study draws on a range of theological, religious, sociological, psychological and ecclesiological theories to test how these theories, used alongside the empirical data, illuminate the study and address some of the particular questions to which attention has been drawn.

#### **2.1**

### **Ordinary Theology**

The theory adopted for appendix 5, originally published as Walker (2008) in *Rural Theology*, is that of Ordinary Theology, as developed by Astley (see for example Astley, 2002).

Evidence was found in appendix 4 to suggest that the beliefs and attitudes of both regular and occasional churchgoers differ from the official teachings and positions of their denomination. Appendix 5 examines this further through the concept of Ordinary Theology, which enables distinction to be made between the formal theologies promoted by professionals and church leaders and those that are held and lived out by ordinary lay people, “who have received little or no theological education of a scholarly, academic or systematic kind”, in their churches and communities. To describe a set of beliefs and practices as a “theology” implies that it is not simply a set of unexamined and unconnected opinions, but has a level of both consistency and coherence. Are there then ways in which

rural Anglicans are discovering their own theology in response to their context, and does any such theology tend towards inclusivity?

In order to broaden the range and type of empirical evidence being brought to bear on the central research question, a different approach was taken in appendix 5. Instead of asking a large number of participants to agree or disagree with particular statements, the method employed involved three phases of qualitative study. Following the analysis of official correspondence, a series of open questions were put into a small scale questionnaire in order to explore in more detail the themes that had emerged. Along with the survey forms, recipients were invited to one of two focus group lunches, where the responses to the issues raised could be explored through structured conversations.

The topic chosen for study was the practice of Communion by Extension. This had the advantage of being a quite recent subject of formal debate and decision by the General Synod and House of Bishops. As well as an authorised liturgy, there were official guidance notes as to how the practice should be undertaken. Analysis of what was going on in parishes, and the rationale for it, showed a very significant divergence from this official line both in practice and theology. Church teaching saw the rite as being a means of “extending the communion rail” from one church to another later the same day in order to allow a larger number of congregants to receive the sacrament of Holy Communion despite the increasing number of rural churches served by a single priest. Local practice more often rooted the theology in that of reservation of the eucharistic elements, which were seen as equally valid for use anywhere and at any time after they were consecrated; for example to enable a midweek or future Sunday communion when the vicar was busy, on holiday or sick. The practice of reservation of the sacramental elements has had longstanding official status in the Roman Catholic Church, and had also been hallowed by

many years of increasing, if informal, use in the Church of England; other areas in which a local and ordinary theology was emerging and being articulated did not have similar pedigree. Two other findings emerged that in the light of the whole research project are of significance. These relate to the importance local people placed on being self-sufficient as a church and to how much it mattered that both the pattern of the worship offered and the identity of the person seen leading it were known and familiar; these were present and articulated in theological terms to the extent that the experience of Communion by Extension had led a significant number of respondents to consider whether the Church of England should embrace the practice of lay presidency. By contrast, Anglican ecclesiology would want to emphasise the local church as finding its identity in its belonging, under the bishop, to a diocese. Its celebration of Holy Communion is not an expression of local self-sufficiency but of this wider belonging. The Church of England's understanding of Holy Orders stresses the role of the priest, whether she or he is associated with the local congregation or is someone who comes from the wider church on a specific occasion, in presiding when the people receive the sacraments.

The ordinary theology observed allowed the rite of Communion by Extension to be used considerably more often and with less complexity in arranging it than the formal teaching and guidelines would have permitted. In consequence parishes were finding themselves able to have services that, if not actually Holy Communion, looked almost indistinguishable from it, and to hold them more frequently, more often in any particular church, and have them led by someone well known as a leader in their local Christian community.

It was not thought necessary at the time of original publication of appendix 5 to link these observations explicitly to the fourfold model of belonging. Reflecting on the whole body of

this submission, where the model has repeatedly been found to undergird the observations, this must constitute an omission. A few remarks here may help rectify this.

Holy Communion as an act of worship falls clearly into the pattern of an activity; those who attend it are expected to see themselves as communicants and to have some regular pattern of sacramental reception; hence it is important that it happens sufficiently frequently to sustain activity belonging. The preference for these services, rather than a non-sacramental act of worship such as Matins, emphasised that the activity is not just coming to church but coming for a particular type of service. When challenged as to why it was not better to hold a single larger Sunday service in one of the villages of the benefice, the answers clearly stressed the importance for many of belonging through place; the experience of joint services was that far fewer people came to them from all villages except the one hosting the occasion. The significance of the person leading the worship being a known individual from the community showed that relational belonging was also a strong element. People identify with a local leader whereas seeing a stranger presiding in church would tend to diminish their sense of belonging.

This further analysis of the material in appendix 5 strengthens the argument that belonging is key to understanding the way people in churches believe and behave. Indeed it has been seen that the desire to promote belonging and to include people through it, is sufficiently strong to trump formal church teaching when the two come into conflict, and for new ordinary theologies to emerge.

Finally, at the time when appendix 5 was written, the fourfold model of belonging was less well developed. Using it more explicitly to reflect upon the findings, it can be seen that the motivations for holding services of Communion by Extension, rather than one of the several alternatives possible, fit well with the model. Thus the “place” dimension of

belonging helps to understand why it is that people reject attempts to get them to travel to worship in a neighbouring village – even if the distances involved are far less than they have to travel for shopping, medical services or leisure activities. The “activity” dimension of worship explains why patterns of services which centralise worship in one church on any given Sunday mid-morning, or those which involve complicated rotas with different time slots and several types of service (Morning Prayer, Family Worship, Holy Communion, Service of the Word) across the month, are also unattractive. The “people” dimension of belonging elucidates the strong preference for having worship led by a locally known and respected person rather than the church bringing in a priest from elsewhere.

## 2.2

### **Implicit Religion**

The theory adopted in appendix 6, originally published as Walker, Francis, & Robbins (2010), in *Implicit Religion* is that of *Implicit Religion*; a theory proposed and developed by Bailey (see, for example, Bailey 1998).

Bailey speaks of those who would, for example, describe themselves by saying that they “believe in Christianity”. Such belief is more likely, Bailey suggests, to be expressed in terms of the request for infant baptism than in regular churchgoing. In terms of the present model this can be seen as a preference for belonging through an event as opposed to an activity. In appendix 5 the theory of Ordinary Theology allowed exploration of beliefs and practices promoted by the congregations, local leaders and church councils of a parish; in appendix 6 Bailey’s theory is applied in order to work with the less articulated or consistent attitudes that are to be found in a sample who were not only very diverse but were not asked to offer reflective thinking.

One of Bailey's markers of Implicit Religion is the statement, "You don't have to go to church to be a good Christian". It was seen in appendix 4 that a majority of both regular and infrequent churchgoers agreed with this statement; appendix 6 explores this particular question further, making use of the responses from the Harvest Festival survey to basic demographic questions and to frequency of both churchgoing and private prayer.

The paper was able to cite and draw on previous research into "de-institutionalised" Christianity that had employed both qualitative (Rose, 2009) and quantitative (Francis and Richter, 2007) methods. However, in the present case the focus was not on those who had left or who found no need of church but on the regular and occasional churchgoers present at an act of worship. At the heart of the findings is that a majority of both men and women, of older and of younger people, of regular churchgoers and occasional ones, and of those who pray almost daily or very rarely, all agreed with the statement. The risks to institutional churches of these attitudes are clear. If a large number of what appear to be the most committed churchgoers, in both their public practice of worship and private practice of prayer, do not see churchgoing as a necessity, then they are potentially more open to either stopping going or at least attending less frequently. More positively from the perspective of churches, these figures suggest that respondents are not simply lapsing into a non-religious position, such as traditional secularisation theory might expect, but are rather persisting in holding a view of Christian faith with which, as was seen in earlier papers, they identify themselves as belonging; it simply is a view that perceives churchgoing as optional to that faith. In terms of the thesis of the present research, the rejection of this statement, that churchgoing is an essential for Christian faith, points to the respondents recognising that belonging is indeed a wider phenomenon than activity participation.

The results of appendix 6 indicate strongly that churchgoing as an activity is seen by most people there as voluntary. Any such activity would need to compete for attendance with other leisure and social activities. This suggests that further study of churchgoing as a belonging activity might usefully compare and contrast the “customer experience” with other leisure activities which sustain regular participation such as sports, social groups or even commitment to watching a regular TV programme. Voluntary activity-based belonging is unlikely to be sustained if churches are hard to access, put on their services at inconvenient times, exhibit poor production values or fail to provide appropriately differentiated forms of participation for different segments of the population.

## **2.3**

### **Social Capital Theory**

The theory adopted in appendix 7, originally published as Walker (2011), in *Rural Theology*, is that of Social Capital, as developed by Putnam (see for example, Putnam 2000).

In appendix 7 this theory is applied to the study of how churches engage with the society around them. The development of the language of bonding, bridging and (more latterly) linking social capital has spawned a number of additional adjectives specific to religious research. Religious Capital has been used to refer to the social capital created by the presence of a religious institution in a community, with its buildings, governance structures and leadership, and has been distinguished from Spiritual Capital which has sought to focus more on the impact of a worshipping community. In appendix 7 of the present study, this theory is applied to the Harvest Festival data used in earlier papers. Social capital looks primarily at the strength of relationships between individuals; as such it provided a tool for investigating the “people” dimension of the belonging model, in a manner that would



complement the focus on activity belonging studied in appendix 6 through the lens of Implicit Religion.

The research question here was to investigate the links between social capital on the one hand and both church attendance and frequency of personal prayer on the other. These can be seen as reflecting respectively the levels of engagement in public and private religion. The first could be seen as indicating the extent to which “people” belonging is associated with “activity” belonging, and it would be plausible to expect a positive correlation. By contrast, whereas social capital measures the involvement of people in creating and sustaining relationships with others, private prayer is a measure of the strength and importance people place on the interior life and their relationship with God. Hence it might be anticipated that any correlation would be negative.

Investigating these relationships required the adoption of two new methods: the construction and reliability testing of scales; regression analysis to control for extraneous factors. The fact that the original sample contained well over a thousand respondents was a strong factor in making it likely that these more sophisticated methods would produce results that had statistical significance. At four, the number of items in the social capital scale was small as well as being previously untested; however they fully satisfied the standard reliability tests. Since the original data collection took place social capital scales have been proposed and tested (see, for example, Williams, 2008), future research will be able to make use of these in order both to increase the likelihood that the scales will prove reliable and to enable direct comparison with other research. The correlation tables including sex and age showed that older people both pray and go to church more, whilst women pray more than men. These factors were then controlled for in the first stages of the regression model.

The first main result of this analysis was that, after controlling for age and sex, “people” belonging, as measured by the Social Capital Index, had a significant positive association with “activity” belonging, as measured by frequency of churchgoing. This replicated the findings of other recent research cited in appendix 7 and, significantly, extended it to the context of the United Kingdom where patterns of churchgoing are somewhat different from the populations studied by others. In terms of directions for future research, these results would suggest that in any future construction of scales to represent the different modes of belonging, it would be likely to find positive correlations between them, much as a later phase of the research (appendix 9) found to be the case with the three scales for Religious Orientation. Hence a person who is strongly associated with the church would be committed to both its activities and events and relate strongly both to particular people and to the place, whilst the individual components would be likely to differ among samples taken at different types of occasions.

The final stage of the regression model looked at the amount of the variance in levels of social capital that is associated with private prayer once age, gender and frequency of churchgoing have been controlled for. Here the result was contrary to what might have been initially expected, in that there was a clear, significant positive association. At present there is no wider body of research investigating the links between private prayer and social capital; it would be good for one to be developed, both in the UK context and more widely.

In terms of the issue of rural Anglican inclusivity that lies at the heart of this investigation, the positive association between private prayer and social capital is a major finding. As the paper notes, it contradicts any assumption that the growth of the inner life, for example through a church focus on spirituality, is in conflict with the outreach of the church to its

community in mission. Whilst it is important not to assume that positive association necessarily implies causality in either direction, it is at least plausible that Church programmes which encourage prayer are more likely to build the connections both between congregation members and into the wider community than to weaken them, whilst both programmes of engagement in the community and church social events are more likely to lead to increased levels of praying than to lower ones. This in turn has implications for the recruitment of clergy, and for diocesan strategies. As an example of the latter, two of the three Worcester Diocesan priorities are evangelism and the deepening of personal prayer. The findings of any single research project must always be subject to confirmation or refutation by others; however it would appear from appendix 7 that prayer associates positively with inclusivity.

## **2.4**

### **Psychological type theory**

The theory adopted for appendix 8, originally published as Walker (2012a) in *Mental Health, Religion and Culture*, is that of Psychological Type, in particular as operationalised by Francis (see for example, Francis 2005).

Appendix 7 had demonstrated the value of creating and using scales in order to investigate the question of rural Anglican inclusivity. Consideration of how to generalise this approach suggested that a second survey should be carried out that, alongside collecting information about beliefs, attitudes, practices and the usual demographic data, would employ various scales that are used in the established literature. In selecting a second group to sample, the criteria employed earlier (an occasion with many occasional churchgoers; time for completion of a questionnaire; a large enough total population; an

event rather than an activity) all still seemed relevant. It would also be important not to be surveying substantially the same people as in 2007. This led to the proposal to use the Worcester Cathedral Christmas Carol services and the collection of around 500 questionnaires over two successive evenings in December 2009. Of these some were not sufficiently complete for use to be made of the various scales included in them, but excluding these, the cleaned data contained just over 400 that were usable. The choice of a cathedral for a study focussed primarily on the rural church was justified on the basis that the diocese, and more particularly the catchment area of the cathedral, contains a high proportion of those who live in rural locations, moreover, the model being studied focuses on a concept of belonging that reaches far wider than the subject's present address. Worcester, along with many other county towns, retains a strong sense of belonging with its rural catchment. The style of the Carol Services at which the survey forms were distributed and collected followed the well-established pattern known as "Nine Lessons and Carols", which is still part of the mainstream seasonal fare of very many rural parish churches, hence whatever might be found at the cathedral service would be more likely to also be true of its village equivalent.

Initial analysis of the sample showed that it did indeed contain a significantly higher proportion of men and the age range was also much less skewed towards the older end of the spectrum than is common in congregational surveys. With almost half of those present indicating that they attend church less than six times a year, the sample had also satisfied the intention of finding a large number of people who do not belong with the church primarily through regular activities. This was therefore a good sample to investigate in order to identify whether the service was including particular groups within the population who are not normally included in Sunday worship.

The set of scales chosen for this first investigation come from the theory of Psychological Type, in which an individual is assigned to one of two polar opposites, for each of four attributes, comprising: orientation (introvert [I] or extravert [E]); perceiving process (sensing [S] or intuition [N]); judging process (thinking [T] or feeling [F]); attitudes (judging [J] or perceiving [P]). The set of four attributes, written as a series of four capital letters, for any individual, is referred to as the person's "type". As the standard results are very different between men and women it is necessary to investigate each sex separately, although the same set of questions are used for both sexes. Similarly, as studies of Psychological Type show different proportions of the various types in different countries, it is necessary to compare with other samples from the same nation, and in particular with the population norms. This theory has its origins in the work of Jung and others, with the standard model being the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI: Myers and McCauley, 1985). The complete set of MBTI questions is, however, rather large and requires a significant amount of time to complete. Using it in these circumstances would have run the risk that very many participants would have failed to complete the survey, particularly given that the survey needed to include both another set of scales and a wide range of more general questions. This particular issue is common in studies of this type and alternative forms of ascribing a specific type to an individual have been developed. For the purposes of the present research the Francis Psychological Type Scales (FPTS) were used. These scales (Francis, 2005) have been developed, tested and found to work well in relationship to the field of Empirical Theology; they form the final two pages of questions in the survey form attached as Appendix 12. In particular they have been used in recent studies of regular churchgoers in the UK, enabling comparisons to be made with the present sample. These studies have shown that churchgoers are distinct from the population norms in that, for both men and women, they contain a much higher

proportion of Judging and Introvert types and that for men Feeling and Sensing types are also significantly over-represented.

Some 80% of all who attempted the questionnaire completed the FPTs scales, a good level of return but one that tends to confirm the view that a much longer set of questions might have produced a rather poorer rate of response. The amount and range of data collected suggests that there are a number of lines of investigation possible into the distinctive Psychological Type profile of the Carol Service. For the purposes of the current research project, it seemed most useful to offer a general analysis of who was present, comparing and contrasting both men and women with the UK population and churchgoing norms.

With the Carol Service congregation being made up of about half occasional churchgoers and half more regular ones, it might be expected that its Type profile would fall somewhere in between the population and churchgoer figures for each scale. The results were however very different from this. For both men and women, when compared with the general population, the attitudes showed a similar over-representation of "judging" types as has been found for churchgoers. For the orientations the Carol Service figures were in line with the population, whereas congregation studies have shown a lower proportion of extraverts. For the two processes, there were more intuitive and thinking types than among churchgoers for both men and women. For men these were broadly in line with the general population figures whilst for women they were significantly higher in both cases. These findings make clear that the Carol Service has attracted both a distinct section of the population and a different one than is drawn to attending Sunday worship.

For the purposes of appendix 8 attention was focussed on the two processes. The judging process (thinking or feeling) has particular interest because it shows the highest difference between men and women in the general population, women attend church much more

than men, and male clergy are much more likely to prefer feeling than lay churchgoing men, all of which might tend to support a view that Anglican worship is in some way “feminised”. The Carol Service was clearly attracting thinking types. The survey was not able to explore questions as to why this should be; however a plausible line of argument for future research is that the style of worship, being a formal presentation of words and music, is less heavily built around relationship than many other special Christmas services and indeed the secular celebration of Christmas. For the perceiving process (sensing or intuiting) the lower percentage of sensing types among both men and women when compared with Sunday worshippers might at first seem surprising for an event with an extremely high musical standard taking place in an evocatively lit Grade I listed building. However, the style of the service is to present the Christmas Story in carols and lessons in a way that invites participants to experience it as mystery rather than a set of facts. It may be that the appeal of this is particularly strong among intuitive types. On the basis of these results, appendix 8 was able to reflect on the Christmas worship offered in Anglican parishes and to suggest that those planning it might pay attention not only to their own preferences but to the distinct appeal of the Carol Service among the thinking and intuiting types in order to include those not otherwise attracted to worship. As the dataset contains many other variables there are clearly research possibilities in exploring how issues of faith, morality and practice relate to the different types identified here.

## **2.5**

### **Religious Orientation**

The theory adopted for appendix 9, originally published as two articles (Walker, 2012b & 2012c), in the Journal of Beliefs and Values and Rural Theology respectively, is that of

Religious Orientation, as set out by Allport and Ross and later developed by Batson and Ventis (see for example Batson & Ventis 1982).

Appendix 8 had identified that the cathedral Carol Service was not only including a different demographic from regular Anglican worship but also a distinct Psychological Type profile. This posed the question as to whether there were other ways of categorising individuals that might test for other types of distinctive appeal and inclusion in relations to this service. Appendix 9 takes up the consideration of the inclusivity of the Carol Service in terms of the theory of Religious Orientation, the basic theory of which is set out in Allport & Ross (1967). Originally inspired by the question as to why, when religions teach tolerance, many highly religious people exhibit strong levels of prejudice, a distinction was made between Extrinsic Orientation, where religion serves some wider or other purpose in a person's life, and Intrinsic Orientation where religion is its own end. To this model a third dimension of Quest Orientation, in which the purpose of religion is to explore questions rather than find answers, was added a few years later through the work of Batson & Ventis (1982), however some studies have continued to focus on the earlier version. The suggestion that the mysterious element of the Carol Service might be attracting the higher number of intuitives seen in appendix 8, indicated that Quest Orientation might be an important part of the investigation.

Within the field of Religious Orientation there have been a variety of different ways in which researchers have sought to operationalise the three constructs into scales. For the purposes of the Cathedral Carol Service use was made of the New Indices of Religious Orientation developed and described by Francis (2007). Whilst the three scales are tested separately, the questions themselves are thoroughly mixed in the order in which they appear on the paper; a copy can be found as the sixth page of Appendix 12. These scales



had the advantages of including all three elements and of having been tested on churchgoers in the UK, with which the current sample could be directly compared. Unlike the Psychological Type scales, the orientations are not set up as polar opposites but as variables constructed by adding the responses to a series of questions, nor are there differences in the orientations of men and women of a size to merit separate consideration. The first part of appendix 9 was concerned with testing their reliability and publishing the results so that other researchers could draw on them. This was important for two reasons: firstly, the scales were still fairly recent and there was no published work relating them to a sample similar to the present one; secondly, there was some concern that attempts to operationalise religious orientation in this way might not work well on individuals who have relatively low religiosity by comparison with regular churchgoers. As can be seen, the alpha coefficients for each of the three indices were above the normal threshold, whilst the internal reliability figures (item-rest of test scores) were all at acceptable levels. A further result was that the three scales had positive correlations between one another within the range of .26 and .38. This was not surprising as it would be likely that scores on all three indices would correlate positively with levels of religious involvement and commitment. At the same time, the fact that the correlations are all well below .40 showed that the three scales were genuinely measuring different aspects of religion. The NIRO scales thus proved to be robust when tested on this sample notwithstanding both its diverse age range and the large number of occasional churchgoers within it. This would suggest that the scales would be a good choice for inclusion in future research projects. As the content of this work was fairly technical it was decided to publish it in a journal where the readership would be relatively familiar with the concept of Religious Orientation.

The second part of appendix 9 followed the patterns of appendix 8 in making comparisons between Sunday congregations and the Cathedral Carol Service, in order to identify the extent to which the latter was reaching out to and including a distinctive group of people. Where the comparative data in appendix 8 had been drawn from a sample of churchgoers in general, appendix 9 was able to draw on a recent paper (Francis & Williams, in press) that had applied the NIRO scales to the Sunday congregations in three cathedrals that were also situated in relatively rural dioceses. The analysis of the data began by considering the three full scales and making comparisons with the Sunday sample. The notion that higher quest orientation might be a factor of youth was not found to be substantiated by the data. By contrast higher levels of intrinsic orientation were found among older individuals; the possibility that this might be driven by church attendance was considered but after this variable was controlled for there was still a clear and positive link. When the results were compared with the Sunday congregations, the most striking difference was in the levels of intrinsic religiosity, which were much lower at the Carol Service and with a much higher standard deviation. Interpreting these figures, the bottom quartile for intrinsic orientation at the Carol Service is at a level equivalent to the lowest 2.2% of those who attend cathedrals on Sundays, whilst at the upper end of the scale there is relatively little difference. In summary the Carol Service includes a good number of people with much lower intrinsic religiosity than does a typical Sunday service. The figures for extrinsic orientation were also significantly lower, whilst the mean of the quest scores was almost the same for both samples. These results suggest that quest orientation is more prominent among attendees at the Carol Service than at Sunday worship and that further study of quest in this context would be valuable. Finally, the three subsections of each of the three scales were compared between the two samples, with the most obvious difference being found in the area of intrinsic orientation; comparison between personal

prayer and the integration of faith into life favoured the former for the Sunday congregations and the latter for the Carol Service.

Taken together, the results of appendix 9 show that the sample exhibits a different pattern of religious orientation than the Sunday congregations, including those whom the latter do not, and hence is worthy of further study. In particular, as the study of religious orientation began in response to questions of prejudice, it would seem important to explore the relationship of prejudice in the present sample, as a measure of how much the carol service congregation holds an inclusive faith.

## **2.6**

### **The Marks of Mission**

The theory adopted for appendix 10, originally published as Walker (2010b) in the Journal of Anglican Studies, is provided by the Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion.

Analysis of the cathedral sample had shown that it is possible to attract a distinctive population of occasional churchgoers to participate in Anglican worship, and this posed the question as to whether they could also be attracted to participate in other aspects of church life. The research had begun with consideration and critique of Anglican mission as set out in the book *Mission Shaped Church*. However, the Church of England was also committed to the definition of mission set out in the 1984 Anglican Consultative Council statement, the Five Marks of Mission (Anglican Communion Office, accessed 310709). The five marks characterise mission as comprising: evangelism; Christian initiation and nurture; loving service; transforming unjust structures; safeguarding creation and sustaining the planet. Despite featuring prominently in the materials prepared for the 2008 Lambeth

Conference of Anglican bishops from across the globe, there was little evidence of them having been studied via quantitative methods. As a delegate at the conference, this seemed to me to be a serious omission. The writing of appendix 10 therefore offered an opportunity to continue the research theme, to shape it once again in an explicitly theological frame, and to offer an example of how the “five marks” might be studied quantitatively.

Although the cathedral survey had not asked questions about the wider social and community engagements of the respondents, such questions had figured in the earlier Harvest study. Appendix 3 had shown that the fourfold model of belonging worked well as a way of describing the behaviour of the whole sample, appendix 4 had found that it was possible to separate out the occasional churchgoers and find distinct patterns of belief and attitude as well as some important similarities between the two groups. For appendix 10 that same method of looking at both the most frequent churchgoers and those who attended most rarely was adopted.

Comparing the ages and employment status of the regular churchgoers and those who came infrequently showed quite a significant difference; this suggested that the ways in which the latter group might belong could be considerably different. However, whilst the figures were significantly lower than for those who come to church regularly, occasional churchgoers showed a strong sense of belonging through people; over 70% claimed to have friends in the congregation and over a third agreed that the vicar knew them well. They also showed strong links to the wider community and a clear majority claimed to enjoy community organisations. Most strikingly, almost half agreed that belonging to the church helped them to feel at home in the community and a majority agreed that the

particular church was special to them. Hence both the people and place elements of the fourfold model were strongly present in this group, who were attending an "event".

The strong links with people expressed by the occasional churchgoers suggested that they could be reached by the church in fulfilment of the mark of mission "Respond to human need by loving service". This however posed the question as to whether they were to be seen simply as recipients. With their strong network of relationships within and beyond the church, could they not also be participants in mission, offering pastoral care to others, with perhaps some training or oversight from the church leaders. This proved to be a turning point in the argument. If occasional churchgoers could be seen as the agents of mission in this respect, what about the other four marks?

Building on their commitment to people, involvement in other community organisations, and willingness to attend a church event, it was possible to identify a range of ways in which occasional churchgoers could take part in fulfilling the marks of mission associated with social justice and care for the environment that would build on their preferred ways of belonging, without drawing them into committee work or regular meetings more appropriate for those who belong through activities and who typically include the church officers and council. In this way it would be possible to extend the mission of the church, without people having to become regular churchgoers first.

A further important extension of the argument took place when the remaining two marks of mission were considered. The strong friendship links between regular and occasional churchgoers fit well with many modern models of evangelism such as Alpha and Emmaus and their willingness to attend church events places them within the reach of church teaching and nurture. However, the fourfold model of belonging cautions against a simple equating of successful mission with increased regular attendance at church. The present

paper (and wider research project) has identified a real challenge to churches here. If you don't have to go to church to be a good Christian, as was found in appendix 6 to be the majority view of regular and infrequent churchgoers, is it acceptable for evangelism and nurture to help people to belong better with the church through events, people, and places, even if this doesn't translate them into being more frequent attenders at worship? In fact are occasional churchgoers, through their varied ways of belonging, proclaiming and teaching, offering a richer vision of God's kingdom compared with those who go to church regularly? If so, then here too they are being the agents and not just the recipients of the marks of mission.

### Conclusion and Evaluation

In this part the intention is: to draw out emerging cross-cutting issues from the research as a whole; to reflect on questions that have arisen when papers from the project have been presented; to identify areas to which further research should be directed. These aims are necessarily interlinked, and in order to give focus three specific areas are studied: future development of the fourfold model of belonging; the implications of the research for how churches make decisions; the tension between a broad model of mission and a narrow one of income generation.

#### 3.1

##### Developing the fourfold model of belonging

At the heart of the work has been the development, at the outset of the project, of a fourfold model of belonging which goes much wider than that of Davie (1994) and adds some content to what might underpin the belonging of those whom Francis and Robbins (2004) have identified as having self-defined religious affiliation. The model has been used in many of the subsequent papers and has been found to be of use both in setting research questions and in analysing and interpreting the results. Investigation of the data has shown that, whilst both regular churchgoers and those who attend infrequently express belonging across all four dimensions of the model, those who come to church more often would appear to have a significantly higher level of belonging through people, place and events, as well as being the ones who belong through activity. The consideration of the three scales for Religious Orientation in chapter 9 poses the question as to whether

it would be possible to construct and test a similar set of scales covering the four types of belonging. A process similar to that used by Francis (2007) could be followed. An appropriately diverse sample population would need to be identified and invited to respond to a large set of possible questions. The methods of factor analysis could be applied to their responses in order to develop a shorter set of statements that produced consistent and reliable scales. It would be highly likely, given the present findings, that there would be positive correlations between the four scales, but that they would also be clearly distinct. If such scales proved to be achievable it would then be possible, in further research, to use the techniques of linear regression in order to investigate the relationship of each of them with such other variables as were of interest. In particular, it might be possible to quantify and extend some of the findings of the present project.

A repeated question at conferences and seminars where the component papers from this research have been presented is whether encouraging individuals to belong more strongly through events, relationships and places is likely to have any positive impact on church attendance at activities. Whilst in some cases the motivation for such a question may be a belief that the other three modes of belonging are only of value if they lead to regular churchgoing, the question itself is fair. The only answer possible to date has been a tentative suggestion that as there seems to be some linkage between strength of belonging in other modes and churchgoing frequency that may indeed be the case. The development of scales and measures however should facilitate a more thorough investigation of this issue.



## Anglican Governance

At several points in the research attention has been drawn to the fact that Parochial Church Councils and others with responsibility for planning and delivering Anglican worship and church programmes are most likely to be those who enjoy regular meetings and hence belong principally through activities. They may fail to understand either that others belong in ways different from themselves, or to recognise their belonging as a genuine expression of Christian faith and identity. The fourfold model however allows a critique of this phenomenon of governance by committee, especially in the light of historical Anglicanism.

Prior to the creation of PCCs in the early twentieth century, the annual Vestry meeting lay at the centre of governance. Here the people would elect one or two churchwardens and the parish church rate would in consequence be determined. The meeting was open to all qualified to vote in secular elections. It was clearly an "event" in the framework of the fourfold model. Indeed it was the attendance and participation of non-churchgoers at the Vestry meeting which led to the setting of zero rates and the collapse and eventual abolition of the rate system of church funding. The modern day annual meeting of a Church of England parish has a limited range of functions and powers which are broadly similar to those of the AGM of a company or charity and except for the appointment of churchwardens the qualification to vote is restricted to those on the Church Electoral Roll. Moreover in recent years parishes have increasingly moved to holding the meeting either directly after or even during the principal service on a Sunday morning. The message would appear to be that this is an occasion for those who belong through activity to elect

individuals similar to themselves to oversee the church. Governance through event has significantly diminished.

With the creation and rise of the Church Council the role of the churchwardens has also reduced. Historically these individuals would have worked with the incumbent in governing the church. As people of note and standing within the parish they would have been individuals clearly identified with the church and hence their network of relationships would have been likely to contain and sustain a strong element of belonging through them as people. The extent to which some of them continue to provide such a channel of belonging, and to provide it for those who are not primarily attracted to belong through activities, is another topic that would repay further study. By and large however it is likely that the influence through people of those who belong in that way is less now than in earlier times.

The picture with regard to belonging through place does however present a more complex picture. Recent years have seen the development of "friends" groups in a number of parishes. Legally separate from the Church Council, these have provided a way to strengthen the structures through which those who wish to support the fabric of a particular church can do so without being drawn into the governance or participation in other aspects of the church programme. They can meet "as required" rather than having a regular and frequent cycle. It is plausible that, as such, they may be more likely to be led by those who appreciate the value of one off events and their distinctive appeal, than is the case for the Church Council.

Outside church circles there is evidence to suggest that governance in other parts of the British establishment by a committee of activists has passed its heyday. Successive national UK governments have sought to re-introduce the personal element to local

services in England through the direct election of mayors and (most recently) police commissioners. Local authorities and others wishing to make major changes (for example to the management structures for council housing) are expected to demonstrate a thorough process of consultation which reaches, via events, beyond the activists. The Localism Act, 2012 had at its heart the intention to put decisions affecting particular places more into the hands of those who live in or care about them. The extent to which these political aims will be achieved may be open to question, but the intention to extend governance in directions that can be seen to include all four dimensions is not. There are issues here that those charged with creating and amending structures for church governance would do well to bear in mind.

### **3.3**

#### **Church income generation**

An issue that has emerged in presenting work from the project to church groups has been that, whilst it may be desirable to operate with a wider view of belonging than simply regular church attendance, it is the latter which enables the bills to be paid. It is therefore worth reflecting briefly on the links between Anglican belonging and church income generation.

Just as with church governance, there has been a huge move in the way in which the mission and ministry of the Church of England is financed through the course of the last century; again it is a move in the direction of activity belonging. The demise of the church rate has already been mentioned, along with it must also go the centralisation and reduction in real value of glebe income (largely rents on lands vested in the church in lieu of tithes). Place-based income generation is now largely through the friends groups

mentioned in the previous section. The connection between income and belonging through individuals has also been severed with the abolition of the Easter offering being for the personal income of the incumbent priest. Interestingly, where dioceses, for example Rochester, have sought to make a strong link between income and the provision of a vicar, there is little to suggest that this appeal is meant to be taken beyond the regular churchgoers to others who, according to the findings of this research, relate to the person being provided, whom many claim “knows me well”.

In place of these historic sources of income that respectively linked to event, place and relationship, churches have developed financial models based strongly on “planned giving” schemes in which regular churchgoers commit themselves to a set amount each week or month and are invited to revise (and increase) their giving on an annual basis. Many churches would now take it as a matter of principle that this is the proper route to fund mission and ministry.

Notwithstanding this national trend, and unlike its urban counterpart, the rural church has however, in many villages, held on to the practice of generating a substantial portion of income from special events such as fairs and fetes. In many cases these are strongly owned by a much wider group than those who attend church frequently, and indeed not only attended by the wider community but staffed by it too. In some places (for example the well dressings of Derbyshire or the scarecrow festivals and open village weekends of Worcestershire) there has been a revival of village wide events that are held to raise church funds. The income from these is not normally restricted to the maintenance of buildings but forms part of the monies that can be applied for general purposes. The thrust of this present research would suggest that belonging through participation in church

social events is not to be underestimated, and that it should properly be seen as part of the funding as well as the mission strategy.

An income generation strategy that took an inclusive, fourfold model of belonging as a starting point would build on the fund-raising success of church social events; it would encourage the work of “friends” groups in raising money for the building; it would give thought to how those who belong through attending occasional services might be drawn into offering financial support. It would also recognise the importance of key church leaders being prominent in appeals for funds in order to make effective use of relational belonging.

### **3.4**

#### **Project Summary**

This research project, which began with a consideration of Anglican mission in the light of the Mission Shaped Church report (Archbishops' Council, 2004) and the theory of Social Capital, has ended with some quite particular indications as to how the rural Anglican Church might engage in its mission more effectively.

It has proved possible to devise (chapter 1) and empirically test (for example, chapter 3) a more inclusive understanding of church belonging than that of Davie (1994), and to achieve more than satisfactory results. The model has shown its ability to facilitate understanding of some of the responses of churches to the internal challenges that face them, for example those they seek to address by adopting the practice of Communion by Extension (chapter 5) and the external tensions in the community (contested belonging and ownership, chapter 2).

One particular feature of this the research project has been its ability, in the light of the model of belonging developed, to analyse the beliefs, attitudes (chapter 4) and belonging (for example, chapters 6, 7, 10) of occasional churchgoers, and to demonstrate where they are different from regular attendees and where both groups show similarities. It has become ever clearer as the research has progressed that these are people who are not simply to be characterised as less committed to the Christian faith but are to be understood as individuals whose belonging is differently structured.

It has been encouraging to see how a wide range of formal theories from within the field of theology, and most particularly empirical theology, has been able to shed light on the research question. In the later stages of the research, the second survey enabled the incorporation of specific measures (of Psychological Type in chapter 8 and of Religious Orientation in chapter 9) into the tools being used. Not only did these further demonstrate the ways in which the occasional churchgoers sampled were distinctive from regular attendees, they also indicated how the research might be taken further beyond the present project, through the creation of a reliable set of scales for church belonging based on the fourfold model.

Overall a picture of the rural church has emerged that should be encouraging to those with responsibility for its life: a picture of a body more inclusive than perhaps it realises; that can draw in people who are unlike its Sunday congregation; that is well-linked to its community; that does not have to choose between the social and the spiritual; whose clergy are widely seen as in touch with the people of their parishes; which can draw on the skills and resources of its occasional churchgoers in pursuit of the mission to which it is called; and whose mission and ministry will be all the more effective for being rooted in a deep understanding of how its people and parishioners belong.

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