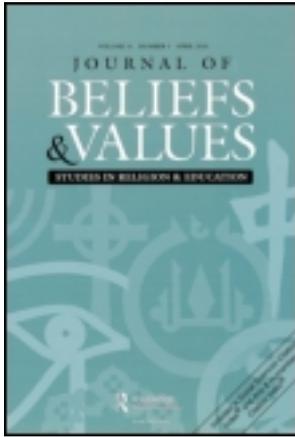


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Publisher: Routledge

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## Journal of Beliefs & Values: Studies in Religion & Education

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjbv20>

### Ordained local ministry in the Church of England

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Published online: 21 Mar 2013.

To cite this article: Michael Whinney (2013): Ordained local ministry in the Church of England, Journal of Beliefs & Values: Studies in Religion & Education, 34:1, 115-116

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2013.759369>

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**Ordained local ministry in the Church of England**, edited by Andrew Bowden, Leslie J. Francis, Elizabeth Jordan and Oliver Simon, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012, x + 178 pp., £16.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-4411-5955-7

I would be delighted if this book was made compulsory reading for all bishops and their senior staff, including vocational advisers, but I doubt that there is sufficient institutional will to do this. It is a highly competent theological reflection on the subject that is readable and clear. Its contribution is important and helpful to the on-going crucial discussion in the Church of England.

The four editors, each providing one or more chapters, together with the four other contributors, have chartered the course of theological thinking and practical action in the field of Ordained Local Ministry (OLM) over the past 25 years. Commencing with a well thought-through chapter on the ecclesiological foundations of OLM the book provides the reader with the history of OLM's roots in Bethnal Green, East London, in 1969 and its development to embrace as many as half the English dioceses by 1998 when the report on the development of LNSMs (to be renamed OLMs) *Strangers in the Wings* was published.

Bishop Graham James, in a profoundly thoughtful and reflective chapter 11, sees that date of 1998 as marking the high watermark of the OLM growth and suggests that it has been slowly ebbing ever since. He points out that by 2010 four key dioceses (Blackburn, Carlisle, Southwark and Truro) had closed their schemes and that only 12 dioceses remained committed to a continuing development of OLM in its classic form of a locally grown ordained ministry to be deployed in its own locality (155).

Chapters 4, 5 and 10 examine in detail how Local Ministry developed in Northern Michigan, Scotland and Gloucester and these provide a realistic, critical assessment of the benefits and limitations, successes and difficulties involved. The personal stories of several OLMs are included in a number of places and make salutary reading. Evidently the church as a whole failed to support and care adequately for many of them. Canon Kathy Lawrence, reflecting on these stories, writes challengingly about the fragility of the OLM vocation in the light of changing theological thinking over the years (146).

Professor Leslie Francis evaluates empirically the effects of OLM in the dioceses and in the Church of England as a whole and then compares the psychological profiles of OLMs to those of stipendiary clergy, both men and women. He demonstrates that the OLMs clearly reflect the make up and temperament of the local congregations in a way that stipendiary clergy do not. He draws the reader's attention to the potential conflict between the OLMs and stipendiary clergy that arises from these differences (103) and ends by urging the use of psychological type awareness training in the professional development of all ordained ministers.

Elizabeth Jordan in chapter 9 asks the question ‘What is the future of OLM?’ and recognises that there are mixed views even among the book’s authors. She writes openly about the disillusionment and stagnation after 20 years or more and that the vision of OLM is still far from being widely accepted. She maintains that the church has been permeated by the ideals of Local Ministry, but regrets that far too many still see OLMs as an extension of institutionalised clericalism rather than a new vision of ministry (131). The authors are agreed and recognise that OLMs challenge the traditional assumptions about ordained ministry and believe that Local Ministry seeks to redress the dominance of the clergy, not displacing stipendiary ministry but complementing it. Collaborative ministry is necessarily defined and seen as being ‘hard work’ and no easy option. It is demanding and expensive if training and support is to be properly set up.

Bishop James had the final word with his measured comment on p. 157 that ‘the most important contribution of OLM to the life of the church lies in the way it has reshaped our understanding of vocation’ relating it not just to the ordained ministry but to the church’s own vocation to be the body of Christ for God’s mission to the world – thus reshaping the theology of vocation itself.

It is a thought provoking book on a subject that some see as controversial but with which all in the church need to wrestle – well worth reading.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2013.759369>

**An end to enmity: Paul and the ‘wrongdoer’ of Second Corinthians**, by L.L. Welborn (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche Band 185), Berlin, De Gruyter, 2011, xxviii + 570 pp., £129.95 (hardback), ISBN 978-3-11-026327-5

Larry L. Welborn, Professor of New Testament and Early Christian Literature at Fordham University in New York, explores Paul’s Corinthian correspondence in its Greco-Roman context and uncovers the identity of the shadowy figure known as the wrongdoer. This fascinating monograph brings together key aspects of Welborn’s approach to Paul that draws on ancient politics, friendship discourse, and the material remains of Roman Corinth. With these, he provides a social and rhetorical analysis of the Corinthian correspondence that brings to the fore the relational dynamics between Paul and the Corinthians in a densely argued *tour de force*.

The preface starts out with a survey of the textual features that led New Testament scholars to hold to some form of partition theory for 2 Corinthians (and to a lesser degree 1 Corinthians). It then goes on to cover the compositional history of Paul’s Corinthian correspondence. After a brief chapter that introduces the key aspects of the book, chapter 2 provides a history of scholarship with regard to the identity of the wrongdoer mentioned in 2 Cor 2:5 and 7:12. Welborn rejects the hypothesis that it is the same person as the immoral brother mentioned in 1 Cor 5. He does, however, provide a profile of this individual that also summarises the findings of scholars who have likewise argued against the connection with 1 Cor 5: ‘The wrongdoer was a member of the Corinthian church; he was influenced by