

## **‘Caring for the Carer’ – How the Church cares for clergy needs and mental health: Palliative Care**

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### **Abstract**

The increasing age of the population and of church congregations brings with it many challenges for the modern clergyperson. This dissertation is aimed at identifying the role played by a specific carer, the local minister, in the care of vulnerable palliative care recipients/patients. Whilst work has been undertaken in recent years to address the gap in the mental health and wellbeing of its ministers, the burden placed upon a local minister is an area that requires Church wide research and development. As the science of palliative care develops and becomes much more accessible to people, so too must our interaction with it and understanding of its value.

Scripture offers a wealth of knowledge in how best to demonstrate love and compassion to those in most need and through life. In particular the Book of Ruth tells the story of a carer becoming the recipient of care from her daughter-in-law. This relationship develops into one of mutual love and respect and shows a modern audience the value that is found in caring for another in mutuality.

This dissertation explores the contribution of recent reports such as the Tanner Report from Dublin and Glendalough Dioceses alongside the Mind Matters Report of 2021, to pastoral care within the Church of Ireland. Good resources already exist but can be complemented at both a local and all island level. Our fragility as human beings reminds us as both clergy and followers of Christ that recognising human dignity is an implication of our being made in the image of God, *imago Dei*. By caring for our carers through adequate support mechanisms and access to services, the Church can support those in most need in their final years, months and days.